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ABSTRACT

Papers included in this volume include: "Leaders for Movement: An Introduction to the Professional Preparation and Development of Middle Level Teachers and Administrators" (P. Gayle Andrews and Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.); (1) "Middle Level Teacher Preparation: Status, Progress, and Challenges" (C. Kenneth McEwin, Tracy W. Smith, and Thomas S. Dickinson); (2) "When Puberty Defines Middle School Students: Challenging Secondary Education Majors' Perceptions of Middle Level Students, Schools, and Teaching" (Angela J. Lexmond); (3) "Preparing Middle Level Teachers in Field-Based Cohorts" (Micki M. Caskey); (4) "Approaching and Avoiding the Middle: Teacher Preparation in New Zealand" (C.J. Patrick Nolan, Ruth G. Kane, and Peter Lind); (5) "Professional Development and the Middle Level School: Tangled Threads" (Thomas S. Dickinson, Deborah A. Butler, and W. Michele Pittard); (6) "Effective Professional Development: What Is It?" (P. Elizabeth Pate and Katherine F. Thompson); (7) "Professional Development for Middle Grades Teachers: Does One Size Fit All?" (Nancy Flowers and Steven B. Mertens); (8) "National Board Certification as Staff Development: A Teacher's Perspective" (Timothy M. Mullen and P. Gayle Andrews); (9) "Leadership Standards or Leaving Standardization for Leadership? What Best Meets the Needs of a Middle Level Movement during Times of Severe Turbulence?" (Steven Jay Gross); (10) "Voices from the Middle: Pre-Service Preparation and Professional Development of Middle School Principals" (Vincent A. Anfara, Jr. and Kathleen M. Brown); (11) "Support for New and Experienced Middle Level Principals: A Proposed Model for Professional Development" (Vicki Nord Petzko); (12) "Developing Distributed Leadership in the Middle Grades: Lessons from School Self-Assessment" (Pritha Gopalan and Alexandra T. Weinbaum); (13) "Leadership for Results" (Ronald Williamson and Susan

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Leaders for a Movement

Professional Preparation and Development of Middle Level Teachers and Administrators

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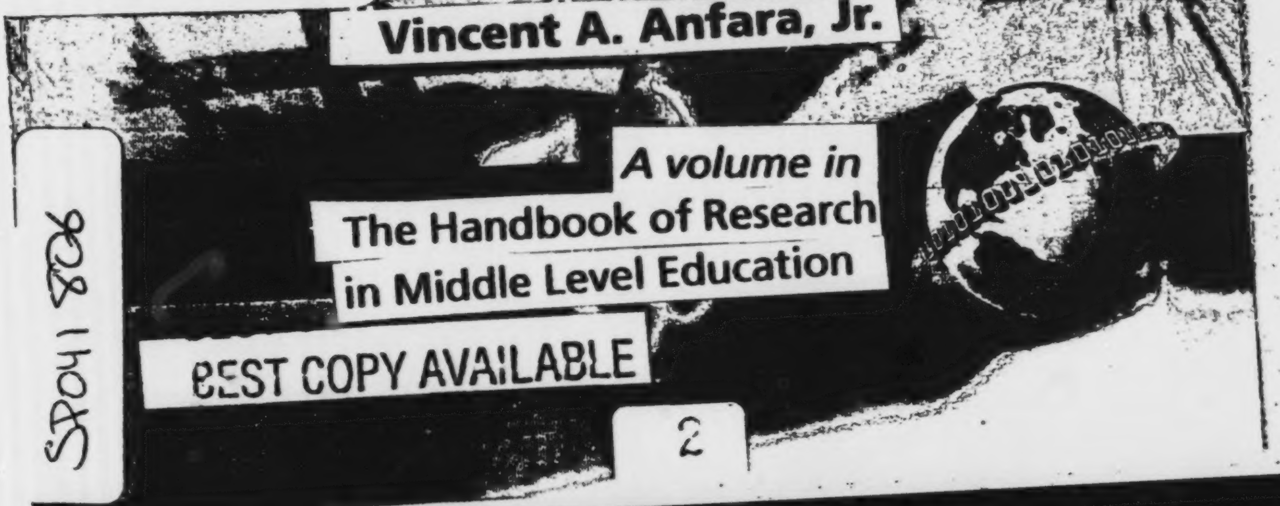

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Leaders for a Movement

Professional Preparation and Development of Middle Level Teachers and Administrators

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Edited by

P. Gayle Andrews
The University of Georgia

and

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.
The University of Tennessee

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Westerville, Ohio

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The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education

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LEADERS FOR A MOVEMENT

An Introduction to the Professional Preparation and Development of Middle Level Teachers and Administrators

P. Gayle Andrews
The University of Georgia

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.
The University of Tennessee

Volume III of *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education* shines the spotlight on the educators who work with young adolescents (ages 10–15) in classrooms and schools across the United States and in New Zealand. Historically, attention to the educators in middle level schools has been in short supply. Advocates for schools designed specifically for young adolescents have been calling for specialized preparation for middle level educators since at least the 1920s, a call that modern proponents of middle schools took up when that movement began in the 1960s (Alexander, Williams, Compton, Hines, Prescott, & Kealy, 1968; Douglas, 1920; Elliot, 1949; Floyd, 1932; George & Alexander, 2003; Keefe, Clark, Nickerson, & Valentine, 1983; Koos, 1927; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002; Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961).

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Generally speaking, those calls have gone unheeded (Gaskill, 2002; Lewis, 1995; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995, 1996; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002), and young adolescents and middle level schools have suffered as a result. Middle level teachers and administrators, by virtue of their day-to-day work with young adolescents in schools, must be the leaders in any effort to improve middle grades schooling. We would argue that many of the current and past barriers to developing and supporting high-performing middle grades schools that are "academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable" (National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 1998) can be traced to the lack of specialized and effective preparation and professional development for middle level teachers and administrators. Indeed, we contend that the middle school movement *cannot* succeed in developing and supporting high-performing middle grades schools without leaders for that movement who have experienced and continue to participate in high-quality professional preparation and development.

Part I of this volume, *Leaders for a Movement*, focuses on the professional preparation and development of middle level teachers. Teachers are at the heart of any endeavor to improve schooling. In their article, "Rethinking Middle Level Teacher Education for the 21st Century," Necochea, Stowell, McDaniel, Lorimer, and Kritzer (2001) explained:

> Good teachers know that at the heart of the teaching-learning experience is a teacher who is well prepared. Good middle school teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to enable them to awaken each day ready to grow, ready to care, ready to risk, *ready to teach*. (pp. 178–179)

Young adolescents cannot perform well—as scholars, citizens, or human beings—without teachers who understand their needs and interests and design curriculum, instruction, and assessment in line with that understanding. In *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century*, Jackson and Davis (2000) describe their recommendation for the preparation and professional development of middle level teachers who will work effectively in collaboration with young adolescents:

> The whole of a teacher's career should be a seamless continuum of learning and development focused always on improving student learning. Critical steps along the continuum include high-quality pre-service teacher preparation, carefully designed mentoring and induction programs, initial certification and licensure, and ongoing professional development, perhaps leading to advanced certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.... In turn, as teachers progress through the stages of the continuum, they can assume positions of professional leadership. . . that enable

them to share the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make them successful teachers. (pp. 95–96)

In the eight chapters included in Part I, beginning scholars and well-known middle school advocates and researchers offer their own perspectives on professional preparation and development for middle level teachers. In Chapter 1, McEwin, Dickinson, and Smith lay the foundation for the continuum in their comprehensive review of middle level teacher preparation's checkered past, current challenges, and future potential. Lexmond highlights one of those crucial current challenges in Chapter 2, recruiting middle level teacher candidates, in her description of the power and problem of puberty's hold on the imagination. Caskey looks at the specifics of field-based preparation programs for teacher candidates at the graduate level in Chapter 3, arguing that extensive field experience, coursework based in schools, a cohort structure, and collaborative partnerships between schools and universities can together frame an effective middle level teacher preparation program. Chapter 4 draws attention to teacher preparation in New Zealand as Nolan, Kane, and Lind outline the intriguing parallels between the situations in New Zealand and the United States, while still clearly delineating the differences that make their country's challenges to provide specialized middle grades preparation unique.

Dickinson, Butler, and Pittard turn the reader's attention to the professional development of middle level teachers in Chapter 5, anchoring the subsequent chapters in Part I with their analysis of the "tangled threads" of historical and recent efforts to engage middle level teachers in purposeful and substantive professional development. Pate and Thompson feature the voices of middle level teachers in Chapter 6 as they define and flesh out the notion of effective professional development. In Chapter 7, Flowers and Mertens look at professional development data from four states and argue that such data must be disaggregated and dissected if decisions about what professional development to offer when and to whom are to be made with any degree of accuracy and any hope of efficacy. To wrap up Part I, in Chapter 8 Mullen and Andrews look at the process of National Board certification as a means of professional development.

Part II of *Leaders for a Movement* turns the reader's attention from teachers to administrators and attempts to pose some new questions and re-answer some of the ever-persistent ones. "Almost all educational reform reports have come to the conclusion that the nation cannot attain excellence in education without effective school leadership" (Crawford, 1998, p. 8). We know that effective school leaders recognize teaching and learning as the core work of school, communicate the school's mission and vision clearly and consistently to all constituents, promote an atmosphere of trust and collaboration, and emphasize professional development (Bauck, 1987;

George & Grebing, 1992; Weller, 1999). Despite the consensus that leadership counts, deep philosophical and political disagreements remain about what kind of educational leaders are needed, what knowledge and skills they should possess, and how they should be professionally prepared and professionally developed.

We certainly could do a much better job developing and supporting the people who lead and manage schools, but how to do so is far less apparent. Sadly, only seven states have specialized preparation for middle level administrators (Alaska, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Oklahoma) with five of these states requiring the middle level credential. Upon closer investigation, many of these specialized administrator programs only require one or two courses or a middle school internship to get the middle level credential. Rigorous programs to prepare effective middle level principals are not found in the majority of these seven states, nor in any of the other forty-three.

As middle level education moves into the 21st century, new questions need to be asked and old ones revisited. There is no doubt that middle level principals are essential to current school reform and improvement initiatives. Their importance is exacerbated by the current indictments of the middle school movement and the general demand for accountability of schools. Emphasizing this renewed interest in the principal, Olson (2000) wrote:

> After years of work on structural changes, standards and testing and ways of holding student accountable, the education policy world has turned attention to the people charged with making the system work.... But nowhere is the focus on the human element in public education more prevalent than in the renewed recognition of the importance of strong and effective leadership. (p. 1)

In Part II, eight chapters (9–16) present a wide variety of topics that relate to the professional preparation and development of middle level administrators. The topics of these chapters range from standards in leadership preparation, principals' views of their preparation programs and professional development opportunities, a professional development model for supporting new and experienced middle level principals, issues related to instructional leadership, the development of the self-efficacy that leaders need to effectively implement reform initiatives, and a first-year principal's reflections on navigating the cultural landscape of the real world of a middle school.

Part III, "Resources," includes a variety of documents and instruments that hopefully will prove helpful to the reader. Included in this part of *Leaders for a Movement* are course syllabi, a classroom observation instrument to be used prior to student teaching, interview protocols based on

Turning Points (1989) recommendations, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform's policy statement on teacher preparation, a master (supervising) teacher interview guide, a questionnaire for students in middle level teacher preparation programs, and a parable of one day in a middle school. We encourage readers to not only use these resources, but also to contact the authors with feedback and suggestions.

We hope that *Leaders for a Movement* will provide both inspiration and ammunition for those seeking to improve schools for young adolescents. Middle level schools need middle level educators at the helm, educators who have been prepared to take leadership in classrooms and schools designed for young adolescents and educators who are committed to continuing to build their knowledge and skills so that they may steer a direct course to high performance that is academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable. No other destination will do.

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part I

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHERS

CHAPTER 1

MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHER PREPARATION

Status, Progress, and Challenges

C. Kenneth McEwin and Tracy W. Smith
Appalachian State University

Thomas S. Dickinson
De Pauw University

ABSTRACT

Advocacy for specialized middle level teacher preparation and licensure has been a priority for many middle level educators and other stakeholders for more than eighty years. However, efforts to establish specialized middle level teacher preparation programs and mandatory middle level teacher licensure have met limited success in many states. This chapter examines trends and issues in middle level teacher preparation, licensure, and program evaluation. Major topics include the following: an historical perspective on teacher preparation, the current status of middle level teacher preparation, middle level teacher licensure, essential elements of middle level teacher preparation programs, and evaluation of middle level teacher preparation programs. An extensive list of references is also provided.

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INTRODUCTION

The education and welfare of young adolescents have seldom been high priorities in the United States. With a few notable exceptions, such as the middle school movement, the preponderance of human and monetary resources have been directed toward other developmental age groups (e.g., young children), special categories of learners (e.g., gifted), specific subject areas (e.g., mathematics), the use of technology (e.g., computers), and other important initiatives. While these and other legitimate causes have received the attention and support of policymakers, interest groups, politicians, state department of education officials, and United States Department of Education staff members, the interests of young adolescents and their teachers have been largely ignored (Alexander & McEwin, 1988; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lipsitz, 1977; McEwin & Dickinson, 1996; McEwin, Dickinson, & Smith, 2002; Vars, 1969).

While the kinds of initiatives just mentioned are necessary and appropriate, similar initiatives responsive to the unique characteristics and needs of young adolescents are noticeably absent. McEwin and Dickinson (1996) noted that "The lack of strong, developmentally responsive policies, practices, and programs for young adolescents and their teachers are conspicuous by their absence and are a constant reminder of the low priority given this developmental age group and their teachers" (p. 1). Unfortunately, this neglect is reflected in the nature of professional preparation programs and licensure requirements for middle level teachers.

ADVOCACY FOR MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHER PREPARATION

The desirability of specialized preparation for teachers of young adolescents is not a new idea that emerged with the creation of middle schools in the late 1960s. Calls for such specialized preparation programs have been included in the literature for over eighty years—a time span which includes both the junior high school and middle school eras (Dickinson & Butler, 1994; Douglas, 1920; Elliot, 1949; Floyd, 1932; George & Alexander, 2003; George & McEwin, 1978; Koos, 1927; Lewis, 1995; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002; National Middle School Association, 1995; Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961).

As discussed in some detail later in this chapter, there is a consensus regarding the appropriate nature of specialized middle level teacher preparation and the kind of licensure regulations needed (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002). Additionally, as reflected in the performance-based National Middle School Association (NMSA)-National Council for Accreditation of Teacher

Education (NCATE)-Approved Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards (2001), middle level educators generally agree about what middle level teachers should know and be able to do.

Despite this consensus about what is needed, there continues to be hesitancy among policymakers and other stakeholders to take the actions needed to assure that all young adolescents in the nation are taught by qualified teachers. The majority of middle level teachers currently teaching young adolescents have not received the specialized professional preparation needed to be effective (McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 2003; Scales & McEwin, 1994). One result of this de facto malpractice is that many thousands of students in the middle grades (5–8) are being taught by teachers who, at least initially, are inadequately prepared to be highly successful (McEwin & Dickinson, 1997).

Historical Perspective

Many early proponents of the junior high school understood the crucial role that specialized teacher preparation would play in the ultimate degree of success of the newly created middle level school (Douglas, 1920; Floyd, 1932; Koos, 1927). Leonard Koos (1927), after noting that junior high school teachers with specialized professional preparation were largely unavailable, hoped that progress in the junior high school movement would eventually lead to a time when school authorities could employ middle level teachers who had been trained for "junior-high-school teaching needs." He stated, "These authorities will then be freed from the necessity of resorting to the expedient of taking people untrained for the task . . . and endeavoring to adapt them in service to junior-high-school teaching" (p. 455). Unfortunately, Koos's hoped-for situation where sufficient numbers of teachers with specialized junior high school professional preparation would be available never became a reality.

Little progress was made in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s toward the goal of establishing specialized middle level teacher preparation programs and licensure regulations (Clark, 1971; McGlasson, 1973; Popper, 1967). This reality was observed by Vars in 1969 when he stated, "After 60 years of existence, the junior high school is still largely a 'school without teachers'—that is without teachers prepared specifically to work at this level" (p. 172). This lack of expertly prepared middle level teachers is one of the problems that eventually led to the demise of the American junior high school (Alexander, 1987; Winchester, 1981).

Fifty years after the first calls for specialized middle level teacher preparation, McGlasson (1973) summarized the situation with his contention: "The junior high school has never been able to develop a program of teacher preparation designed for that level, approved by state departments of education, and implemented by teacher education institutions" (p. 4). Toepfer (1973) in his article titled "Must Middle Grades Education Consist of Cast-Offs?" noted that middle grades staffing practices had followed the "retread" approach by staffing middle level schools with teachers prepared to teach other age groups at other levels of schooling (e.g., young children and older adolescents; elementary and senior high school). Lipsitz agreed with that assessment in her landmark book, *Growing Up Forgotten* (1977). She argued that "no noteworthy programs of teacher preparation have been designed for junior high school teachers. Preparation is usually either elementary or secondary—that is, senior high" (p. 117).

Middle level authorities Van Til, Lounsbury, and Vars (1967) summarized the situation regarding middle level teacher preparation in these words: "Perhaps the most serious obstacle to the educational development of the junior high school has been the lack of teachers specifically prepared for work at this level" (p. 49). They further noted that this longstanding problem had elicited such labels as a "blind spot in teacher education" and "the forgotten teaching area." Unfortunately, in some states, these labels still accurately describe the situation regarding middle level teacher preparation and licensure.

The middle school movement began in the late 1960s primarily as a reform of the junior high school movement. Unfortunately, the middle school movement inherited many of the same problems that plagued the junior high school. One of these problems was a continued lack of teachers with specialized middle level teacher preparation. Pioneers of the middle school movement recognized the potential liability of this situation and advocated strongly for the specialized preparation of middle school teachers.

William M. Alexander, a pioneer and founder of the American middle school, frequently noted the importance of specialized middle school teacher preparation in his writing (Alexander, 1987; Alexander & McEwin, 1988; Alexander, Williams, Compton, Hines, Prescott, & Kealy, 1968). Donald H. Eichhorn, another pioneer of the middle school movement, also supported the specialized preparation of middle school teachers. In his influential book, *The Middle School* (1966/1987), he wrote "It is vital for institutions of higher education to create programs designed to prepare teachers and administrators specifically for the middle school" (1987, p. 104). These and other early advocacy efforts set the stage for more recent actions on the part of middle level advocates, both individuals and professional organizations, to push for more universal availability of teacher preparation programs that directly address the specialized knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by middle level teachers.

Middle Level Teacher Preparation Today

Middle level teacher preparation is currently more widespread than ever before. In 1996, McEwin, Dickinson, and Swaim conducted a national study of teacher preparation programs and found that 51% of institutions reported offering middle level courses or having specialized middle level teacher preparation programs at one or more degree levels. This percentage was an increase compared to the 33% found in a similar study in 1987 (Alexander & McEwin, 1988) and the 23% in a 1973 national study conducted by Gatewood and Mills. Although these results are encouraging and show progress in the implementation of middle level teacher preparation programs, much remains to be accomplished before all young adolescents will be taught by highly qualified teachers.

Although the number of specialized middle level teacher preparation programs has grown rather significantly in recent years, relatively small percentages of middle level teachers have received preparation in these programs. For example, a study conducted by Scales and McEwin (1994) found that only 20% of middle level mathematics, social studies, science, and language arts teachers had received specialized middle level teacher preparation before they began their careers. Since their survey targeted six states *with* middle level teacher licensure, this percentage would be even lower in states *without* these requirements. For example, a national survey of middle school principals conducted in 2000 by Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, and Petzko (2002) found that only 18% of respondents reported that the majority of teachers at their schools held middle level teacher licensure (p. 10).

On a more encouraging note, a comparison of results from two national surveys of middle school programs and practices conducted in 1993 and 2001 revealed that increasing percentages of middle level teachers have received specialized professional preparation (McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 1996, 2003). Respondents were asked to provide the percent of core subject teachers who had received specialized middle level teacher preparation. One of the response categories was 76–100% of teachers. The percentage of schools selecting this category increased from 9% in 1993 to 25% in 2001. The percentage of schools indicating fewer than 25% of teachers had specialized middle level teacher preparation was 62% in 1993 and 45% in 2001. Though these trends are positive, they also reflect the continuing practice of employing teachers who have not received specialized middle level preparation.

Middle Level Teacher Licensure

A major reason specialized middle level teacher preparation programs are not universally available in the nation is the failure of many states to design and implement licensure regulations that reflect and require the specialized knowledge, dispositions, and performances needed to teach young adolescents successfully. States made some progress during the junior high school movement toward specialized middle level licensure. Six states issued a license for teaching in the junior high school in 1925 (Powers, 1925) and nine states issued middle grades licensure distinct from elementary and senior high school teaching in 1932. Requirements for these special licenses ranged from one six-week course to 18 semester hours (Floyd, 1932). However, these special licensure plans were not required and never became influential factors in the professional preparation of junior high school teachers. There are many lessons to be learned from these early failed attempts to initiate special middle level teacher preparation programs, one of which is the ineffectiveness of *voluntary* specialized middle level teacher preparation regulations.

The number of states with some provision for middle level teacher licensure was 2 in 1969 (Pumerantz, 1969), 8 in 1978 (Gillan, 1978), 26 in 1985 (McEwin & Allen, 1985), 33 in 1992 (Valentine & Mogar, 1992), and 44 in 2000 (Gaskill, 2002). These increases document a significant trend toward specialized middle level teacher licensure. However, Gaskill found that only 21 of the 44 states identified in her study as having middle level teacher licensure *required* teachers to hold that license to teach young adolescents. She also found that many states have continued the practice of having overlapping grade levels for elementary, middle, and high school licensure (e.g., K–8, 5–8, 7–12; K–8, 7–12).

Overlapping licensure has plagued middle level teacher preparation and weakened the effectiveness of middle level teacher licensure regulations for many years. One result of such licensure structures is that many prospective teachers select options that provide the widest range of job possibilities instead of choosing to focus on specialized preparation to teach a single developmental age group. McEwin and Dickinson (1996) noted "One need only consider the impossibility of providing high quality preparation programs and field experiences which will adequately prepare prospective teachers to teach two developmental age groups (children and young adolescents) ranging in grade level from kindergarten to eighth grade to understand how ludicrous and ineffective such programs are" (p. 11).

The kinds of teacher preparation programs that typically result from overlapping licensure regulations emphasize teaching young children with little attention being given to teaching young adolescents, although teachers from these programs are licensed to teach them (e.g., grades K–8).

Similar analogies can be drawn with licensure plans that include middle and high school grades (e.g., 6–12, 7–12) or all grades K–12. The result of this situation is that the majority of current teacher preparation programs focus either on the elementary or high school levels with the assumption that graduates of either group are, in some magical way, also well prepared to teach young adolescents (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996).

An additional barrier to the implementation of specialized middle level teacher preparation programs is that of states issuing "add-on" middle level endorsements. One of the most negative connotations associated with "add-on" plans is the clear message to prospective teachers and other stakeholders that preparing to teach young adolescents is not a worthy goal by itself. Typically, in endorsement plans prospective teachers must first earn a degree and license in elementary education, a high school subject area, or some other teaching field, then extend their study to be licensed for middle level teaching. Experience has clearly shown that one of the least effective plans for ensuring the special preparation of middle level teachers is creating an add-on endorsement plan (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 104).

Some reasons for the lack of success of "add-on" endorsement plans include the following: (a) Endorsements are rarely required for teaching in the middle grades since most states allow elementary and secondary prepared teachers to teach young adolescents, (b) endorsement requirements often amount to little more than two or three courses that may or may not focus directly on middle level teaching, and (c) endorsement plans that are more comprehensive require prospective teachers to extend their college careers for a semester or more, which is expensive both in human and financial terms. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that few prospective teachers select the middle level endorsement route (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996).

With "add-on" endorsements being so ineffective, the question of why they exist and are widely used emerges. The answer to this question is "political compromise," which in turn compromises the interests of young adolescents and their teachers. When policy makers and other influential groups do not agree that mandatory middle level teacher licensure should be implemented, the bureaucratic "non-solution solution" to the problem is to leave existing licenses as they are (e.g., K–8, 7–12) while adding a voluntary endorsement that includes the middle grades (e.g., 5–8, 6–9). The end result of such decisions is two-fold: Few states establish specialized middle level teacher preparation, and the practice of allowing almost anyone with any kind of license to teach young adolescents continues. Some states have avoided the barriers just discussed and implemented mandatory middle level teacher licensure with very limited overlap in grades. Those states have been very successful in having teacher preparation institutions create separate middle level teacher preparation programs (e.g., North Carolina, Ohio).

In fact, a close relationship exists between the type of licensure available and the number of teacher preparation institutions that offer specialized middle level teacher preparation programs. For example, 82% of all middle level teacher preparation programs in 1991 were in states where middle level licensure/endorsements were available. Additionally, 57 percent of all specialized middle level teacher preparation programs were in only five states—states where specialized licensure was required for middle level teaching (McEwin, 1992; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995). The message here is clear. Mandatory middle level teacher licensure leads to the development, implementation, and continuation of middle level teacher preparation programs.

A key function of state licensure agencies and professional practice boards is to protect the public, including young adolescents, from incompetence. Typically, these agencies and boards have been rather diligent in their responsibility for assuring that teachers teaching children in elementary schools and older adolescents in high schools receive the specialized professional preparation needed to be successful. However, in at least 29 states, these agencies and boards have failed to require specialized middle level teacher licensure that directly addresses the preparation of middle level teachers (Gaskill, 2002). The belief among members of licensure agencies and boards in these states appears to be that "any preparation will do for teaching young adolescents—no specialization needed." This belief and the resulting policies that it creates need to be reversed and the interests of young adolescents given the highest priority—one that overrides administrative convenience factors such as having "flexibility" when employing middle level teachers (McEwin & Dickinson, 1995, 1996; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002).

The implication here is not that all middle level teachers who have not had specialized middle level teacher preparation are ineffective. There are many excellent middle level teachers in the nation's classrooms who have not had this preparation. However, middle level teachers should enter the profession only after completing a rigorous professional preparation program that provides them with the specialized knowledge and skills needed to be highly successful. Learning on the job by adapting knowledge, skills, and insights previously learned about how to teach other developmental age groups and learning to teach middle level students by "trial and error" teaching may eventually lead to successful teaching, but this is an ineffective teacher preparation model. This situation leaves too much to chance and penalizes young adolescents who happen to be taught by teachers who are still in their interim "learning period." The norm should be that all young adolescents are taught by teachers who wish to teach them and have the professional preparation background to be highly successful doing so, even in the first years of their career. This goal is realistic and attainable. It does, however, require that all states design and implement teacher licensure regulations that mandate specialized middle level teacher preparation.

The Current Status of Middle Level Preparation

Advocacy for specialized middle level teacher preparation and licensure has reached unprecedented levels in recent years. The support base for this advocacy has expanded significantly through the efforts of professional associations (e.g., National Middle School Association); foundation initiatives (e.g., Carnegie Corporation of New York, Kellogg); special alliances (National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, Southern Regional Education Board); state departments of education (e.g., Ohio Department of Education, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction); and other groups. The issuance of five middle level teacher certificate areas by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has also raised awareness about the existence and value of specialized middle level teacher knowledge (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001).

An additional powerful influence in the effort to establish middle level teacher preparation programs is the National Middle School Association (NMSA) Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards. These standards are approved by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and are part of the national accreditation process (National Middle School Association, 2001). The NMSA/NCATE-Approved Teacher Preparation Standards are also being widely used by state departments of education and professional practice boards as guidelines for state licensure standards and by teacher preparation program representatives to create specialized middle level teacher preparation programs.

An important factor supporting the increased advocacy for specialized middle level teacher preparation comes from a growing consensus among middle level teachers and other middle level educators about the benefits and importance of specialized middle level teacher preparation (Arth, Lounsbury, McEwin, & Swaim, 1995; Boyer, 1983; DeMedio & Mazur-Stewart, 1990; Dickinson, 2001; Jenkins & Jenkins, 1991; Keefe, Clark, Nickerson, & Valentine, 1983; McEwin, Dickinson & Hamilton, 2000; Page, Page, Dickinson, Warkentin, & Tibbles, 1992; Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2002). The support of middle level teachers for specialized middle level professional preparation substantiates their belief that such preparation is needed and desirable.

A national study of 2,139 middle school teachers in six states reflects the level of importance placed on specialized middle level professional preparation by middle school teachers (Scales & McEwin, 1994). Results from this study revealed that the more middle level courses preservice teachers had, the more likely they were to report their program was highly comprehensive and, the greater the number of courses devoted to the middle level, the more favorably respondents rated their middle level preparation programs. A national study of National Board Certified middle level teachers regarding the importance of specialized middle level teacher preparation programs also confirmed support for this type of preparation. One hundred percent of respondents agreed that there are "important ideas, principles, or understandings that an effective middle level teacher needs to know" (McEwin, Dickinson, & Hamilton, 2000, p. 212).

Essential Elements for Middle Level Teacher Preparation Programs

Not only is there consensus regarding the importance of specialized middle level teacher preparation but also about what elements are essential for middle level teacher preparation programs (Cooney, 2000; Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin & Dickinson, 1996; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002; National Middle School Association, 2001). A brief discussion of these vital elements follows. This discussion is limited to elements unique to middle level preparation programs and does not include others that are essential to all quality teacher preparation programs (e.g., diversity, technology).

Element One: A Comprehensive Understanding of Early Adolescence and the Needs of Young Adolescents

Literature from both the junior high school and middle school traditions describes key elements of middle level teacher preparation programs including a strong emphasis on the importance of middle level teachers having a comprehensive understanding of young adolescent development and of the implications of that knowledge for their practice (Alexander & McEwin, 1988; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1976; Curtis, 1972; Elkind, 1998; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Association of Secondary School Principals, n.d.; National Middle School Association, 1995, 2001).

Middle level teachers should be experts in the development and needs of young adolescents. Elkind (1998) suggests that a comprehensive understanding of the developmental needs of students "is the most solid and substantial basis upon which to build curricular, assessment, and teaching skills" (p. 186).

Prospective middle level teachers attain the expertise they need through formal study of young adolescent development and by working directly with middle level students to apply that knowledge. Without a solid understanding of the characteristics of young adolescents and meaningful opportunities to transform that understanding into practice, the success of middle level teachers and middle schools is limited. Effective middle level teacher preparation programs provide prospective middle level teachers experiences that help them understand the developmental realities of young adolescents within the complex environment of social, cultural, and societal contexts. The intended outcome of a strong emphasis on knowledge about young adolescent development is to enable middle level teachers to engage successfully in developmentally responsive programs and practices (e.g., developmentally responsive curriculum design and teaching strategies).

Element Two: Philosophy and Organization of Middle Level Education

Middle school literature gives a high priority to the importance of middle level teachers' understanding of middle level philosophy and organization. As noted by McEwin & Dickinson (1996), "Just as young adolescents are different from young children and older adolescents, middle level schools are different from their counterparts at the elementary and high school levels. This difference is much more than that of appearance, however, and goes to the philosophical foundations of middle level education and the organizational structure that grows from and supports this philosophy" (p. 27). A thorough study of middle level philosophy and organization is considered to be a primary element of middle level preparation programs.

The literature reflects widespread agreement among stakeholders that quality middle level teacher preparation programs are anchored within a context that supports and responds to young adolescent development. Study of middle level philosophy and organization typically includes, but is not limited to (a) the origins and development of the junior high and middle schools, (b) effective middle level school organizational features and practices, (c) middle level philosophy, (d) middle level trends and issues, and (e) other information that helps prospective middle level teachers understand the rationale for and context of middle level schooling (Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin & Dickinson, 1996, 1997; McEwin, Dickinson, Erb, & Scales, 1995). A superficial exploration of middle level philosophy and organization is unacceptable if middle level teachers and middle level schools are to establish structural contexts that maximize student learning and promote healthy development.

Element Three: Middle Level Curriculum

Quality middle level teacher preparation programs place a high priority on middle level curriculum, with an emphasis placed on discipline specific, integrative, and interdisciplinary approaches (National Middle School Association, 1995, 2001, n.d.). Effective middle level teacher preparation programs provide prospective teachers with the "... knowledge, dispositions, and skills to set high expectations for all students, provide them with a rigorous and challenging curriculum, engage the students in learning, and make sure that students have the support they need to participate and succeed" (National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002, p. 2).

In middle level teacher preparation programs, emphasis is placed on the uniqueness of middle level curriculum. Teacher candidates in these programs learn not to rely solely on subject matter or disciplinary curriculum organization when they teach. Rather, they emphasize interdisciplinary and integrative approaches that incorporate young adolescent interests and concerns about themselves and the world as starting points for curriculum planning (Dickinson, 1993; Jackson and Davis, 2000, pp. 46–47; National Middle School Association, n.d.).

Prospective middle level teachers should learn about middle level curriculum through formal study of the curriculum and by working directly with the curriculum in a variety of forms and formats. Typical topics of study in middle level teacher preparation programs include past and present theorists of middle school curriculum and various curriculum designs, formats, and propositions important to the development of a deep understanding of that curriculum. Emphasis is also placed on how middle level curriculum can be designed to support and extend young adolescent learning (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996).

Element Four: Middle Level Planning, Teaching, and Assessment

Middle level teacher preparation programs teach prospective teachers to plan, teach, and assess student work successfully based on solid content knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of young adolescent development. The systematic study of planning, teaching, and assessment includes the wide range of developmentally appropriate instructional strategies and the research that examines their most appropriate use. Teacher candidates are given many opportunities to translate this knowledge into practice through field experiences such as internships and student teaching.

Short and long-term planning techniques are also a crucial component of middle level teacher preparation programs. Teacher candidates learn to develop both daily lessons and interdisciplinary units. They construct and employ assessment techniques ranging from traditional testing to authentic assessments, portfolios, exhibitions, and open-ended problems. Examples of ways prospective middle level teachers apply their knowledge and skills in planning, teaching, and assessment include the application of that knowledge on a continuing basis by: (a) working on an interdisciplinary team to create interdisciplinary and/or integrative units of study, (b) participating in the delivery of instruction to young adolescent students, (c) monitoring student learning and improving instruction, and (d) being involved in the assessment of instruction of young adolescent students (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002).

Element Five: Concentrated Study in Two Broad Teaching Fields

Middle level teacher preparation programs typically prepare prospective middle level teachers in two or more teaching fields (e.g., content areas such as mathematics and science). Preparation in multiple fields provides a solid academic foundation of content knowledge in the particular disciplines and allows prospective teachers to develop connections and interrelationships among the disciplines as well. Shulman (1986) proposed three categories of content knowledge: (a) subject matter knowledge, (b) pedagogical content knowledge, and (c) curricular knowledge. All of these categories are important and have implications for middle level teacher preparation programs.

Effective middle level teacher preparation programs include courses in academic disciplines, methodologies, and middle level curriculum. They also include field experiences with young adolescents in middle level schools. In other words, effective middle level teacher preparation programs provide teacher candidates with opportunities to learn about and demonstrate competence in all categories of content knowledge. According to the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform (2002), having two or more teaching fields "helps prospective teachers build a thorough underpinning of content, pedagogy, and the connections and interrelationships among academic disciplines and other areas of knowledge" (p. 3).

Support for two teaching fields has been included in the literature since the early years of the middle school movement (Alexander & McEwin, 1988; Compton, 1973) and is reflected in the NMSA/NCATE-Approved Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards (2001). The rationale for having two teaching fields includes, but is not limited to (a) teachers that teach on teams are knowledgeable in two disciplines, making it easier to integrate subject areas; (b) teachers are licensed to teach in two content areas which provides flexibility in employment whether or not the teachers teach on teams; and (c) content knowledge in two broad teaching fields more accurately reflects the nature of middle level curriculum (e.g., science rather than just biology or physics).

Considering the current political climate related to the appropriate professional preparation of teachers, it is important to note that research has not yet revealed the depth of content knowledge needed by elementary, middle, and high school levels. Several studies have shown a positive connection between teachers' subject matter preparation and student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Wilson, Flooden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). However, a link between a specific amount of this preparation—usually measured as number of courses or hours—and student learning has not been established. The amount of preparation is an important factor since many people, including those opposed to having two rather than one content area required in middle level teacher preparation programs, assume that "the more the better." Research does not support this assumption (Monk, 1994; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001).

Element Six: Middle Level Field Experiences

Middle level field experiences are given a high priority in middle level teacher preparation programs (Butler, Davies, & Dickinson, 1991; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995; National Middle School Association, 2001). This priority reflects the view of teachers and other stakeholders that clinical experiences are one of the most powerful components of teacher preparation programs (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). Middle level clinical experiences provide prospective middle level teachers a context for learning about young adolescents and their appropriate instruction and assessment. Early and continuing middle level field experiences provide a learning laboratory for formal study and application where school site and university-based education faculties can teach, supervise, and advise prospective teachers. In effective middle level teacher preparation programs, teacher educators take steps to ensure that clinical experiences are directly related to course work rather than being disconnected and/or inconsistent with what prospective middle level teachers are learning in their courses. It is essential that all activities that are a part of middle level field experiences be focused and well structured (Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Grisham, Laguardia, & Brink, 2000).

Early and continuing middle level field work provides a progressive sequence for middle level teacher preparation programs. This sequence follows "a pattern of increasing complexity and involvement, culminating in an extended internship" experience where prospective middle level teachers "are responsible for groups of young adolescents" (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 100). By having a progressive sequence over an extended period of time, prospective middle level teachers can move through various aspects of the essential elements of programs in a three-part organization—introduction, development, and maintenance (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996). Middle level field experiences also allow multiple mentors, coaches, and teachers to work closely with teacher candidates.

Field experiences for prospective middle level teachers can be greatly enhanced within the context of university-public school partnerships, (e.g., professional developmental schools). These collaborative partnerships "bring together university and school-based faculty to share responsibility for the clinical preparation of new teachers, the professional development of experienced faculty, the support of research directed at improving practice, and enhanced student learning" (Levine, 1997, p. 1). Such collaborations provide a mechanism for improving middle level teacher preparation and therefore advance the goal of providing highly qualified teachers for all young adolescents (Allen & McEwin, 2001).

In spite of the consensus regarding the importance and appropriate nature of middle level teacher preparation, skepticism about the value of this special preparation persists among educators, policymakers, and the general public. One of the ways to offset this barrier is through the development of a comprehensive research base that directly addresses middle level teacher preparation issues.

Evaluation of Middle Grades Teacher Preparation

While the call for specialized teacher preparation for young adolescents has been present in the literature for more than 80 years (Douglas, 1920; Koos, 1927), *research* on teacher education (for all levels and academic disciplines) is a relatively new field of study. In a research report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) suggested that "the development of a sustained line of scholarship that examines the content, character, and impact of teacher education programs only began in the 1960s and gained momentum in the 1980s" (p. 1).

The opinions of policymakers are often sharply divided regarding the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. Wenglinsky (2000) described the debate in a recent research report that examines the links between the characteristics of teacher education institutions, their programs, and teacher effectiveness. Some policymakers contend that teacher preparation programs are mostly successful in preparing teachers and require few, if any, changes. Other policymakers contend that teacher preparation programs are largely failures, and should, with few exceptions, be eliminated. Wenglinsky argued that the empirical basis for either of these views is weak: "Little research has been conducted on the effectiveness of teacher education programs, and what has been done has produced largely contradictory findings" (p. 4). Other recent, comprehensive research studies on teacher preparation cite the same deficiencies in the empirical research base on teacher preparation. In a study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education (Wilson, Floden, Ferrini-Mundy, 2001), the researchers reviewed 300 published reports about teacher preparation and found only 57 that met their criteria for rigorous research. Though their report is meticulous in regard to these studies, they lamented, "The research base concerning teacher preparation is relatively thin" (p. i). Regrettably, the research base concerning *middle grades teacher preparation* is an even thinner subset, and the literature to report regarding *evaluation of middle grades teacher preparation* is a smaller subset of that.

Three bodies of literature inform this examination of evaluation of middle grades teacher preparation: (a) research related to teacher education and teacher preparation in general, (b) research related to specialized preparation of middle level teachers, and (c) research related to current best practices and recommendations in program evaluation. Because the research related to middle grades teacher preparation in particular is so limited, a broader examination of the literature related to teacher education and teacher preparation in general informs this inquiry. However, even this research is limited. According to Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001), most studies have examined particular programs, courses, and students in single institutions.

Noticeably absent in the teacher preparation research are studies related to the relationship between specific parts of teachers' preparation (subject matter, pedagogy, clinical experiences) and subsequent teaching practices—including the effects of these practices on student achievement. In addition, a recent report published by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003), indicated that the critical teacher turnover rate is "aggravated by hiring unqualified and underprepared replacements who leave teaching at very high rates" (p. 6). This situation indicates a need for longitudinal studies that examine the impact of teacher preparation over time, including the connections among teacher preparation, induction programs, and professional development opportunities.

The next body of literature that informs this examination of evaluation of middle level teacher preparation is the research related to specialized preparation of middle level teachers. Much of the literature related to specialized middle level teacher preparation has already been reviewed in this chapter and will not be repeated here; however, this research will be referenced and informs this discussion of evaluation of middle level teacher preparation.

As has been mentioned, the research and evaluation literature in middle level teacher preparation is relatively meager. This may be due, at least in part, to the relative newness of specialized middle level teacher programs in many states (Gaskill, 2002). Although the number of specialized middle level programs has increased substantially in recent years, many of these programs are new and have relatively small enrollments (McEwin, Dickinson, & Swaim, 1996). Additionally, national standards for middle level teacher preparation were not available until 1989. These standards, written by the National Middle School Association (NMSA) and approved by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2001), were revised in 2000. Middle level teacher preparation programs reviewed under the national accreditation process now use the NMSA/NCATE-Approved Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards. One implication of this change is that the major focus of future accreditation reports will be on outcome data. The collection and availability of this data will likely help increase the quality and quantity of research on and evaluation of middle level teacher preparation programs.

A limited number of studies have emerged that examine the importance or impact of specialized middle level teacher preparation or licensure within a state (Boren, 1997; Mertens, Flowers, & Mulhall, 2002; Stonner, 1998). Additionally, a few middle level studies have included data from several states or the nation (Mertens, Flowers & Mulhall, 2002; McEwin, Dickinson, & Hamilton, 2000; Scales & McEwin 1994; Southern Regional Education Board, 1998). These studies have provided important information for the middle level teacher preparation knowledge base. For example, results from the Scales and McEwin study (1994) revealed that middle level teachers highly value specialized middle level teacher preparation while Mertens, Flowers, and Mulhall (2002) found evidence to support an indirect link between middle level teacher licensure and student achievement through heightened levels of interdisciplinary team and classroom practices. Although these and other similar studies are appropriate, a much more comprehensive research base is needed that focuses directly on the specialized professional preparation of middle level teachers. Studies must be undertaken across institutions before more general conclusions can be made about what characterizes effective middle level teacher preparation.

Finally, this examination is informed by current best practices and recommendations in program evaluation. In a recent special issue of the *American Journal of Evaluation* (Greene, 2001), contributors were asked to assess the field of evaluation and its future. These contributors, described by the editor as the "Oracles of Evaluation," included Michael Scriven, Robert Stake, Ernest House, James Sanders, Lois-Ellin Datta, Blaine Worthen, Jennifer C. Greene, Patricia Rogers, and others. Several of the authors wrote about the importance of accepting multiple methodologies in evaluation. Greene (2001) surmised, "While skirmishes still occur, most members of the evaluation community currently support the coexistence of quantitative and qualitative methods, if not their rapprochement" (p. 399). Pawson and Tilley (2001) concur that the diversity of methods makes the "point, yet again, that the only methodological gold standard is pluralism" (p. 323). Mark (2001) suggests that "to achieve a lasting peace...those who come from the quantitative tradition will need to embrace the importance of human construals [An act of construing or interpreting] and meaning-making, while those from the qualitative tradition will need to embrace some form of realism" (p. 459).

Researchers in teacher education concur with the necessity of methodological diversity. In their research report, *Teacher Preparation Research: Current Knowledge, Gaps, and Recommendations*, Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001), discussed seven considerations related to the design and conduct of future research on teacher preparation. One of their recommendations is specifically related to the importance of adding descriptive information to the quantitative data teacher preparation programs typically collect.

> Data collected about teacher preparation should describe specific features of the content and quality not merely counts of courses and vague terms such as "alternate route." We need better analytic and descriptive tools for characterizing teacher preparation programs and their policies, as well as more refined and more stable measures of teacher knowledge and teacher behavior. (p. 32)

Nichols (2002) wrote about the need to include stakeholders and participants in the planning of programs. She suggested that the involvement of program participants could provide vital information that will help to ensure the success of the program. In teacher education and middle level teacher preparation, this involvement could mean asking pre-service teachers or recent graduates what is necessary for them to be successful. It might also mean involving other stakeholders (e.g., supervising teachers, program faculty, school principals) in the process.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

For those responsible for the professional preparation of teachers of young adolescents, it is a time for both celebration and concern. Reasons for celebration include (a) the number of specialized middle level teacher preparation programs in the nation is unprecedented, (b) the number of states with middle level teacher licensure requirements has increased substantially in recent years, (c) national middle level teacher preparation standards are available to guide program development, (d) model middle level teacher preparation programs exist in many parts of the country, (e) increasing numbers of professional associations and alliances are supporting specialized middle level teacher preparation, and (f) larger percentages of middle level schools are reporting that teachers have received middle level teacher preparation at some degree level.

Although progress has been made in promoting specialized middle level teacher preparation, significant concerns endanger many of the accomplishments already achieved. Some examples of these threats include: (a) federal legislation that defines teacher qualifications narrowly with an almost exclusive focus on content knowledge, (b) teacher shortages that often result in policymakers lowering standards for teachers entering the profession, (c) the creation of "alternative routes" to teacher licensure that allow entrance into the profession with little or no professional preparation, (d) lack of support for specialized middle level teacher licensure requirements by administrators who value "flexibility" in hiring more than specialized middle level teacher preparation, (e) a limited middle level teacher preparation research base, and (f) a lack of understanding among many educators and the general public regarding the importance of the specialized knowledge, skills, and disposition needed by teachers of young adolescents.

The good news is that the potential to overcome these concerns is already present. With the strong support of professional associations, advocacy groups, teachers, administrators, and other groups and individuals, advocacy and political action can overcome obstacles in the present political climate and educational environment. More than ever before, increasing numbers of stakeholders realize that to neglect the professional preparation of middle level teachers is to neglect the education and welfare of young adolescents. However, the potential to move forward with the middle level teacher preparation agenda requires concerted action on the part of all stakeholders. Collaborative action is the next logical step toward progress; the price of inaction will be borne primarily by the young adolescents themselves.

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CHAPTER 2

WHEN PUBERTY DEFINES MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Challenging Secondary Education Majors' Perceptions of Middle Level Students, Schools, and Teaching

Angela J. Lexmond
Indiana University

ABSTRACT

The predominant view of adolescence within a developmental framework regards biology, particularly puberty, to be the central factor in explaining youth behaviors (Adams, 1997; Finders, 1999; Lesko, 1996, 2001). During a general methods course, 21 secondary education majors participated in curricular activities designed to elicit and challenge negative perceptions of early adolescents and middle level teaching. At semester's end, while the preservice teachers spoke of early adolescents more positively and expressed more interest in teaching at the middle level, they continued to view middle level students as intellectually disinterested. Findings indicate a need for programs that specifically recruit and specially prepare teachers for the middle

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level. Otherwise, cultural assumptions about early adolescents are likely to remain fixed and middle level students and schools invisible.

INTRODUCTION

Random House Webster's Dictionary (Braham, 1996) defines adolescence as "the transitional period between puberty and adulthood; youth" (p. 10). At first glance this definition is straightforward and simple. However, the period noted begins with the biological reality of puberty but ends with the more vague destination of "adulthood," the beginning of which is culturally ascribed (Arnett, 2001). Different cultures use different milestones as signifiers of adulthood (e.g., marriage, independence from parents, age). The dictionary definition captures the conundrum of understanding adolescence: Is it a biological phenomenon? Or is it the eventual arrival at a set of culturally determined expectations? Or is adolescence both *biologically* and *culturally* determined?

Lesko's (1996, 2001) analysis of adolescence links biological realities to cultural conceptions. "Typically, teenagers appear in our cultural talk as synonymous with crazed hormones, as delinquents, deficiencies, or clowns, that is, beings not to be taken too seriously" (2001, p. 1). Lesko lays the blame for current negative conceptions of youth at the feet of the prevailing developmental framework for understanding adolescence, which, in essence, "offers these facts as biological and beyond social intervention" (2001, p. 3). She contends that this framework presents youth in a way that asserts that biology is destiny, and that puberty, defined as a naturally occurring and unchangeable phenomenon, explains the perceived problematic behaviors of adolescents. As an alternative framework, Lesko presents a constructivist analysis that explains current conceptions of adolescence as social, historical, and cultural constructions.

While Lesko discusses adolescence in terms of youth from ages 12–19, other scholars whose work grounded this research project note that early adolescence in particular (ages 12–15) suffers from negative cultural images. Adams's (1997) analysis of the dominant discourse surrounding early adolescence and Finders's (1999) suggested methods for disturbing conceptions of early adolescence as a hormonally driven developmental stage provided my research with the theoretical underpinnings to connect cultural perceptions of early adolescents with preservice teachers' interest in teaching at the middle school level. In my interpretation of their work, all three scholars (Adams, 1997; Finders, 1999; Lesko, 1996, 2001) view conceptions of adolescence from a historical perspective and as socially derived, and therefore, bring into question the developmental framework that presents adolescence as a biological fact.

According to Lesko (2001), in the developmental framework "biology is destiny, in that the adolescent body with hormone-induced growth spurts creates psychological, emotional, and interpersonal problems as young people and those around them respond to the physical and psychological changes" (p. 7). My emphasis (and that of Adams, 1997 and Finders, 1999) is on early adolescence because this period most often includes the actual onset of puberty and happens during the middle school years, defined as grades 5–9 (National Middle School Association, 1995). Early adolescence is the period when the negative assumptions stemming from the developmental framework that Lesko (2001) outlines seem particularly profound. For example, Finders (1999) described the preservice teachers in her study as maintaining an image of early adolescents as "mindless entities, as detached hormones tied to uncontrollable bodies" (p. 256). Finders argued that her preservice teachers' strong metaphors about early adolescents prevented them from seeing middle school students as multidimensional and capable of intellectual curiosity. Whereas intellectual development should be considered an integral part of overall development, intellectual changes are perhaps blighted by the more obvious physical changes during this stage.

Thus, cultural conceptions of adolescents in general (Lesko, 1996, 2001) and early adolescents in particular (Adams, 1997; Finders, 1999) are primarily negative and biologically based. Conceptions, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs belong to a group of constructs that are described as learned predispositions to respond to an object or class of objects in a favorable or unfavorable way (Richardson, 1996). Finders (1999) found that, "preservice teachers identified the dominant cultural traits of [early] adolescents as driven by hormones, devoid of intellectual curiosity, rebellious, and resistant to authority" (p. 256). Such negative constructions of early adolescents, unfortunately, influence potential teachers' grade level preferences and ideas about appropriate pedagogy, curriculum, and discipline for middle level students. Finders discovered that even when faced with contradictory positive evidence, the preservice teachers had difficulty breaking with this construction of early adolescents as incompetent and in need of control. Her recommendations for helping preservice teachers to question such cultural assumptions about early adolescents were at the heart of this study.

Research Design

This study took place at a large, Midwestern university. Because this particular institution did not offer a program specifically designed for preparing middle level educators, all participants were secondary education majors being prepared to teach middle and high school. This qualitative study was designed to identify, track, and challenge secondary education majors' perceptions of middle level students, schools, and teaching. The main portion of this project was conceived as an instrumental case study (Schwandt, 1997; Stake 1995) utilizing problem-based methodology (Robinson, 1993). As Schwandt (1997) explains, "cases can be chosen and studied because they are thought to be instrumentally useful in furthering understanding of a particular problem, issue, concept, and so on" (p. 13). Robinson (1993) argues, "educational researchers who want to have an impact on practice should adopt a problem-based methodology, in which the theories of action relevant to the problem situation are investigated, evaluated, and if necessary, altered" (p. vii). In this case the alleged problem was negative conceptions of early adolescents, and interventions were introduced both to bring to the surface and to impact a particular group's perceptions related to middle school students and teaching.

During a single semester general methods course, 21 secondary education majors of various disciplines (identified as the key participants, informants, or preservice teachers) participated in four curricular activities designed to elicit their perceptions of and attitudes toward early adolescents and middle school teaching. The activities challenged them to look for contradictions to common cultural assumptions about early adolescents. These four curricular experiences involved: (a) writing an autobiography of the self as a middle school student, (b) reading select articles about the meanings of adolescence, (c) viewing a video featuring a model middle school teacher and her intellectually engaged students, and (d) conducting a case study of a middle school student the preservice teachers worked with at their practicum sites. These assignments, videotapes of the class sessions surrounding the assignments, written reflections by the key participants about the class activities, reflections by the key participants about their field placements with middle school students, and focus group interviews provided data sources for the study.

As a participant observer in this course, I concentrated primarily on describing the key participants' reactions to the various deliberately planned curricular experiences, as well as their reactions to their field experiences in a middle school. Although not the instructor of the course, and therefore not the key participants' evaluator, I did both plan and lead the instruction of the four lessons surrounding the assignments focused on adolescence. I carefully observed and recorded if and how the preservice teachers negotiated new meanings while participating in these curricular activities. I also conducted all the focus group interviews occurring at the beginning and end of the semester, which doubled as introductions to and debriefings of the field experience.

In addition to the in-depth study of one methods section, 143 secondary education majors who were enrolled in general methods courses at the same university were asked about their grade level teaching preferences in a narrative survey item. I begin with a discussion of the data garnered by this broader survey.

Findings

The results of the survey indicated that most (78%) of the 143 respondents desired high school rather than middle school teaching assignments. The secondary education majors were asked, "If you were offered two teaching positions, one in a middle school and the other in a high school, which would you choose and why?" I begin with responses to this question to highlight the prevalence of negative perceptions of early adolescents among the secondary education majors at this institution. For example, one respondent wrote,

> I would choose the high school position hands down. The difference between high school and middle school is the same as babysitting compared to teaching. It is my belief that children at those middle school ages should specifically concentrate on developing their self-identity. They are in the middle of a hormonal shock and don't have time to perform well in school. This has been proven.

The survey responses also reveal the preservice teachers' use of the developmental framework to explain their understandings of early adolescence. This response is representative:

> Middle school students are going through many changes that would interfere with their ability to learn. Teachers have to be extremely patient. I don't know if I would be able to control adolescents who are going through puberty. They are very confused. High schoolers are a little more under control and have more discipline. They want to learn and are determined to do well because of future plans (college).

Finally, the survey responses uncover some consistent themes among those who noted a preference to teach at the middle school level. I used these themes to inform my research as I worked with the preservice teachers in the key methods class. For example, survey respondents who preferred the middle level felt they could have a greater impact on younger students. Some also felt too close in age to high school students to be confident in teaching them. Others disclosed a lack of confidence in their knowledge about their content area and consequently felt the middle level would not test their knowledge to the same extent as high school teaching. As one said,

> Right now I would choose the middle school [position] for the following reasons: The difficulty of the material taught is less. It would allow me the opportunity to build a strong base of mathematical knowledge. I feel further from the middle school students [in age] than I do from the high school students. (It would allow for more of a "teacher" role than a "friend" role).

This response centered on the preservice teacher's confidence; both in teaching the content area and regarding the small age gap between the preservice teacher and potential high school students. This secondary education major seemed to want to teach at the middle level initially, but she conveyed that her own increasing age and experience would eventually give her the confidence to move up the ladder to high school instructing. The response revealed no particular interest in middle level students or middle school programs.

Of those survey responses that did show an actual interest in middle level students, the explanations for preferring the middle school job were related to middle school students' developmental needs, which most often encompassed the physical, emotional, psychological, and social aspects of middle school students' lives. The *intellectual* aspects of their development were rarely mentioned. A preservice teacher who wrote about the damaging nature of cliques that she remembered from her own middle school days said, "I want to be a teacher who integrates the students and helps them to feel good about themselves." Another explained that he had "had a terrible time in middle school." He also noted, "There are a lot of children in middle school seeking guidance, and the chance to help even one student find a place for themselves would make all the trauma of middle school well worth it." A third wrote about the importance of forming "meaningful relationships with middle school students." She explained that they have "so much going on at this age—physical changes, new school structure, emotional changes," and implied that she wanted to support middle school students through these kinds of transitions. Another wrote that although she felt "middle school would be too boring intellectually," she would still opt for the middle school job because "there is such a great emotional need at that level and a teacher can play a big part in filling that." Still another said, "I think middle schoolers need guidance, and I am comfortable being a positive role model."

It became clear that many preservice teachers who preferred to teach at the middle level emphasized the counseling aspect of the teaching role. Interest in the intellectual development of students was mainly absent from their rationale. Although a well-intentioned, child-centered approach is evident in the responses, there is a clear focus on the social and emotional rather than the intellectual life of students.

While most of the survey respondents expressed a preference for teaching at the high school level, even those preferring the middle level revealed some negative conceptions of early adolescents. Adams (1997), Finders (1999), and Lesko (1996, 2001) would all argue that these conceptions are an extension of pervasive negative constructions from the wider culture. By way of suggesting general cultural attitudes toward early adolescents, Wendy, one of the key participants who planned to become a middle school teacher, noted, "Whenever I mention middle school, people curl their noses." One goal of this inquiry was to counter such an attitude so that secondary education majors in the key methods class/section might be more attracted to middle level education and more likely to see early adolescents as capable and interesting students to teach. In the following sections I discuss some findings from the curricular interventions that I introduced to the key participants in the general methods class that I studied most extensively.

"RAGING HORMONES" REVISITED

Toward the end of the semester, the course instructor asked the key preservice teachers involved in the study to conduct a case study of a "typical" middle school student from their field placements. In my analysis of the case study reports, I looked particularly for evidence that supported or contradicted the "language of exceptionality" described by Finders (1999) in her study, *Raging Hormones: Stories of Adolescence and Implications for Teacher Education.* Finders' preservice teachers used this "language of exceptionality" when describing characteristics of particular middle school students that they considered atypical or unusual. According to Finders (1999),

> When reporting on classroom observations, these preservice teachers kept the dominant cultural narrative as a backdrop. Preservice teachers measured themselves and their students against a singular standard. When their actions matched, they described the actions as "normal" and "typical." When actions did not match, rather than treat the assumptions as problematic, these preservice teachers described the behaviors as "extraordinary" and "amazing." (p. 257)

Like Finders, I found that if a middle school student was interested in reading or some other serious intellectual pursuit, preservice teachers described this behavior as exceptional, not characteristic of most early adolescents. The preservice teachers' case study reports were laden with this "language of exceptionality" (see Table 2.1). I also discovered that partnered with the "language of exceptionality" was what I called the "language of typicality," regarding characteristics that are seen as typical for the age group (see Table 2.2). The language of typicality was most often applied to character flaws while the language of exceptionality was most often applied to character strengths. Only two preservice teachers defined their subjects as typical using positive descriptors; the others seemed to rely heavily on a primarily negative cultural construction of early adolescents (Finders, 1999) when describing their typical characteristics.

Table 2.1. Examples of "Language of Exceptionality" in Case Study Reports

Cindy:	I was thinking to myself, *how many eighth graders* love Shakespeare?
Mike:	This student by most *would not seem typical* in any way due to his outgoing, loud personality that has shined out each time I have visited the school.
George:	Billy handles his seventh grade world unbelievably well. He was *atypically mature* for his age.
Laurie:	In regards to swimming, Mitch shows commitment *beyond his seventeen years*.
Darren:	I was very impressed by the confident nature of this eighth grader. He first told me that he loved science fiction. He then *truly surprised me* by telling me that he had read *MacBeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* outside of class. When I asked about enjoyment and comprehension, Eric said, "Yes, I understood and enjoyed both plays." I still *cannot imagine being in eighth grade* and reading Shakespeare. He was *impossible to pigeonhole like most* eighth graders.
Renee:	She seems really well adjusted as a 14 year-old freshman, and I would have to say that her well roundedness impressed me. *Very rarely* do kids ask to be pushed, and yet after speaking with her one time she disclosed that she would like others to help push her.
John:	He is very knowledgeable (*for a kid his age*) about airplanes and the dynamics of what makes an airplane work. WOW! I never knew *kids THIS age* knew about the Raptor!!
April:	Overall, Angel is a deep thinker, a mature student and wants to help whenever possible. Once again, this is *not a typical teen* I was dealing with.
Wendy:	During our last meeting, we discussed national and international issues. Her knowledge of these issues *was surprising*. Many *students are not* avid observers of the news.
Steve:	The intelligence and knowledge behind what this young mind *of only thirteen years* of age was saying gave me hope. Hope that there was someone out there who wasn't just influenced by his or her peers and could think on their own. …mainly with topics such as the U.S.-Chinese relations, *which surprisingly enough* he was knowledgeable on the topic. I *was surprised* that this young man had such a great outlook on life. Notice how Michael is now referred to as a young man. In my eyes, he is *years ahead of his age*.
Nick:	This statement struck me as a very strong statement *for an eighth grader*. For Bob to realize that friendship takes work is *amazing*.
Ellen:	He is a well-rounded young boy and has stronger self-esteem *than most people his age*.

Note: "Language of exceptionality" has been italicized for ease of identification.

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Table 2.2. Examples of "Language of Typicality" in Case Study Reports

Cindy:	Besides the liking of Shakespeare, opera, and the fact that a boy would openly display his emotions, Mathew is *just like the rest* of his eighth grade classmates. He enjoys hanging out with his friends and wears the stylish shoes and clothes to be cool.
George:	His looks must be ultra important to him. *After all, he is a seventh grader* living in a consumer society. Appearance is *generally* the top priority for *all people his age,* among others obviously.
Liz:	I relate the idea of storm and stress to what Steven is going through. The storm and stress concept is based on the premises of conflicting with parents, mood disruptions, and risk behavior. I found *all of these concepts relevant* to Steven's behavior.
John:	One sentiment that I got repeatedly was the desire to grow up more quickly so that he would have the freedom to make his own choices. I personally think this is how *the majority of the kids his age* feel. He and his friends would do that ten-step handshake thing that *all kids* do when they greet each other.
Laurie:	Mitch is a *typical* high school student. Like many high school students, he is having issues relating to many adults in his life.
Darren:	*Just like any other kid his age,* his parents were too nosy and asked him too many questions. I asked Eric what he spent his money on and he told me music, movies, and food. This seemed like the *typical response* of a fifteen year old.
Natasha:	His attitude to school *is probably quite typical.* For Jason it is a place where he has to go to and what makes it even worse is that he has to go there early in the morning.
Sandra:	This incident [referring to a boy who called the subject a name as a "loser"] *shows that kids are* insecure, sensitive, and self-conscious. I talked to my teacher about what she thought of Adrienne, and she liked her fine. She referred to Adrienne, "She's just your *average,* run of the mill, everyday middle school girl." Sometimes she has a problem with Adrienne talking in class, and once she got caught for passing a note, but she said that is *pretty typical* of most students (girls).
Nick:	Bob does act out in class, "but [quoting the classroom teacher] *no more than the other students.*" At this age, the teachers say that it is a given that at one time or another *all middle school students* will act out.
Ellen:	There are times when *like any other* eighth grade student, Michael loses his concentration and his grades reflect this.

Note: "Language of Typicality" has been italicized for ease of identification.

Finders (1999) explains that the dominant cultural construction of early adolescents as "mindless entities, as detached hormones tied to uncontrollable bodies" (p. 256) acts as a metaphoric filter through which the preservice teachers in her study viewed all interactions with middle school students. Such a filter does not allow early adolescents to be seen as individuals, and thus, it does not allow counter examples to challenge the monolithic construction of early adolescents as lacking any intellectual capacities. This met-

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aphoric filter explains why so many preservice teachers considered intellectual interests in particular to be uncharacteristic of middle school students. Instead of questioning the general assumption that middle school students are difficult to engage intellectually, the preservice teachers in both Finders's (1999) study and mine labeled any intellectual interests as exceptional and outside of the norm. Their cultural stereotypes of adolescents held firm. Nonetheless, my key study participants did present some evidence of changes in their overall perceptions of middle level students throughout the course of the semester.

Impressions of Middle Level Students at Various Points in the Semester

This section highlights what the key preservice teachers reported when asked at the end of the semester what they liked and disliked about the middle school students in their field placements. Their responses appear in list form to allow a comparison with other lists about the characteristics of early adolescents the preservice teachers had generated earlier in the semester. Table 2.3 shows the list generated by the 21 key preservice teachers at the beginning of the semester when asked to brainstorm assumptions made about middle school students in our culture. Table 2.4 shows the responses they generated when asked to describe the middle school students featured in the video, *Good Morning Miss Toliver* (Foundation for Advancements in Science and Education, 1993). This documentary video features several classroom episodes of a model middle school teacher and her clearly intellectually engaged students. The contrast between these initial two lists is startling, and a class discussion about the lists indicated this fact was not lost on the class members. When analyzing the lists generated about the students from their field placements (Tables 2.5 and 2.6), a much more balanced perception of middle level students emerges.

Table 2.3. Cultural Assumptions about Early Adolescents

Hormonal	Emotional
Surly	Self-Absorbed
Self-Conscious	Immature
Unruly	Rebellious
Obnoxious	Pesty
Impressionable/Easily Influenced	Clique-ish
Need Acceptance	Pretentious
Awkward	Not Focused/Don't Care
Social	Inquisitive/Curious

Table 2.4. Descriptors of Miss Toliver's Middle School Students

Eager	Excited about Learning
Interested/Engaged	Motivated to Succeed
Future Oriented	Sociable
Interactive Learners	Sincere
Well-Behaved	Smiley/Happy
Animated	Creative
Different Perceptions to Same Stimulus	Confident
Team Workers	Respectful
Competitive	Trusting and Loved

Table 2.5. What Key Participants Liked about the Middle School Students in their Field Placements

Enthusiastic about learning
Outgoing and excited to see me
Accepting and blunt
Respectful and happy to see me
Eager to learn
Friendly. They initiated contact with me. They clapped for me!
Responsive, cute, innocent, impressionable, and want to please
Energetic, excited, open, and ask questions
Amazing, willing to learn. They make discussion fun
More respectful than I expected, nice
Talkative, anxious to share opinions
Interested in my life
Disciplined and attentive

Overall, the preservice teachers found the middle school students in their field placements more supportive, accepting, and welcoming of them than they had expected. However, as can be seen in Table 2.6, the preservice teachers also thought the middle school students could be remarkably mean to each other. The list of things the preservice teachers liked about their field experience students contained some commonalities with the list generated about Miss Toliver's students in the video we had viewed earlier in the semester (Table 2.4), in particular their "enthusiasm for learning." By contrast, some of the common cultural assumptions about early adolescents noted at the very beginning of the semester (Table 2.3), such as "hormonal," "emotional," "self-absorbed," "obnoxious," and "pretentious" seemed not to

Table 2.6. What Key Participants Disliked about the Middle School Students in their Field Placements

Very into style
The girls were mean to each other
Too docile, non-participatory
Tattling and need for babysitter
Girls dress too maturely
They learn content and complete steps at a slower pace
Not interested in WHY learning is important, see school as social center
Some disinterested and did not seem to care
Not mature enough to handle controversial topics
Some did not care when they got in trouble
They pick on their peers

surface at all. As a whole, the preservice teachers did find the middle school students "impressionable," but early in the semester this was understood to mean "easily influenced by peers," while later in the semester this was understood to mean "open to the influence of good teaching." The lists generated about the students from their field placements seemed to rely less on cultural stereotypes and more on actual observations. Yet, determining the *overall* impact of the preservice teachers' work with middle level students and that of the curricular interventions required a look across multiple data sources.

Impact of a Middle School Field Experience and Curricular Activities

By semester's end, most of the preservice teachers in the key group had spent at least 25 hours in a middle school classroom and had participated in the four curricular activities centered on early adolescence that were built into the syllabus of their general methods course. At the end of the semester, I wanted to know if such participation had made any difference: (1) in the ways these preservice teachers talked about middle level students, schools, and teaching; and (2) in the ways they talked about their grade level preferences for future teaching jobs. To ascertain the potential impact of the field experience and curricular activities, I used several sources of data. I used the survey administered to the key participants at the beginning and the end of the semester, the field experience debriefing sessions (focus group interviews), field experience journals, and field experience reflective papers to help gauge perception changes. In essence, the evidence revealed that the most powerful impact from the preservice teachers' perspectives stemmed from the field experience itself, but some of the data suggest the curricular activities played at least some role in changing their perceptions and grade level teaching preferences.

At the beginning of the semester, 8 of the 21 preservice teachers in the key section had identified one of the middle grades (sixth, seventh, or eighth) as their preferred grade level for future teaching jobs on the narrative portion of the survey. This percentage (38%) was already higher than I had expected based on the broader survey results, which showed only 22% of the 143 respondents preferred to teach a middle level grade. Nonetheless, the question that I wanted to pursue was whether this group of preservice teachers would be more interested in teaching at the middle school level at the end of the semester than they had been before they participated in a middle school field experience and the specially designed curricular activities about early adolescence. The answer was in the affirmative (see Table 2.7).

Table 2.7. Changes in Grade Level Teaching Preferences of Key Participants

Beginning of Semester			*End of Semester*		
Preference	*Count*	*Sex*	*Preference*	*Count*	*Sex*
Middle School	8	6F and 2M	Middle School	11	10F and 1M
High School	12	7F and 5M	High School	9	3F and 6M
Unsure	1	M	Unsure	1	M

In comparing each individual's grade level preference (middle or high school) at the beginning of the semester to his or her preference at the end of the semester, more of the key preservice teachers at the end of the semester preferred middle school or would now be willing to consider working at the middle school level. Only one who had selected a middle level grade at the beginning of the semester said he would select a high school job at the end of the semester. An individual who was unsure about grade level preference at the beginning and end noted that he had been "skeptical of middle level students before, but could not say that anymore. Middle school students were a delight to work with and teaching them was fun." Thus, interest in teaching at the middle level had in fact increased for the key group of preservice teachers.

Although more of the key participants expressed interest in teaching at the middle level at the end of the semester, the explanations they offered for their grade level preferences remained similar to those of the other 121 survey respondents who had not participated in a middle school field experience or the four specially designed curricular activities. Those key participants who preferred the middle level felt they would have a better chance of affecting their students' lives if they were to teach younger students. For example, April wrote, "I feel as though I can make a bigger difference in that age group. Middle school kids are more impressionable, I feel as though I can create positive, creative minds at that age." Michelle also cited the possibility for impact when she wrote, "To me, working with middle school students would be more rewarding because they are still at an impressionable age, and they still care about pleasing teachers that they like." Liz's version of impact also centered on middle school students still being malleable: "I want to be able to help students and keep them from 'slipping through the cracks.' By the time students get to high school, it is much harder to change their mindset." Renee wrote, "I like the idea of getting them when they are young and being able to have a (bigger?) impact on them. I like the idea of getting people involved and passionate about things early." There was an overwhelming sense from those preferring middle school jobs that students at the middle level would be more pliable and more likely to positively receive and benefit from a teacher's efforts.

Another common response among the key preservice teachers who preferred a middle school position revealed a lack of confidence about classroom teaching and /or content area competency. Wendy wrote, "At this time, I would feel more comfortable accepting the middle school position. Right now I feel like I could connect better with this age group. I also think they might be more forgiving of first year mistakes!" Ellen expressed, "I [would] feel more comfortable at this point in a middle school. I would like to start in a middle school and move to a high school when I feel more comfortable with my teaching techniques." Jill also reflected the confidence factor by writing:

> I suppose as a beginning teacher I would choose the middle school. I do not feel prepared for working in a high school yet. I need to get a few years on me physically, and I need to learn what their abilities are by working with younger students first, if I ever go into high school.

Those who questioned their own competency as new teachers conveyed a certain "stepping stone" attitude toward middle level teaching. Only one preservice teacher indicated that teaching at a high school would be a necessary stepping stone to teaching at a middle school. Darren, who selected the high school level, wrote, "I think structure, discipline, and classroom management are more important at the middle level, and I would like to develop these skills more before I work with younger students."

Other preservice teachers who indicated they would select the high school job said they would do so because they could relate better to high school students. Tina's response ended with, "I tend to lean towards high school. I really can't say why, though. Probably because I'll be able to relate to the students more." Steve said he would take the high school position because of "the way I feel I could relate to the students." He also thought high school students were "more mature, calm, and willing to learn." Being able to "relate" to high school students presumably because one is closer in age than to middle school students is a vague commentary but seemed to be based on the assumption that a teacher's youth is an automatic "in" with high school students, and pretty much a prescription for success in these preservice teachers' minds.

Another rationale offered by key preservice teachers who opted for high school positions highlighted their interest in coaching and/or being involved in the overall high school environment. Cindy wanted to participate in field trips and extra curricular activities (mainly Key Club), but only at the high school level. John spoke plainly, "I want to coach high school athletics and live vicariously through the kids I teach and coach. I also want to be back in the high school environment since it was my favorite level of education." Although she understood that coaching opportunities are available at the middle school level, Laurie preferred high school because, "I feel [the extra-curricular activities] are more intense at the high school level."

Other lines of reasoning for preferring a high school teaching position included the desire to teach advanced and/or controversial content which middle school students were seen as lacking the experience or maturity to handle. The one preservice teacher who moved from an interest in teaching at the middle level at the beginning of the semester to a decision to opt for a high school job at the end of the semester reasoned that he found the middle school students in his field experience "too needy." He felt there was too much pressure for him to act as a role model, which he found intimidating and worrisome.

It is interesting to note that all the preservice teachers from the key group who newly identified themselves as future middle school teachers at the end of the semester were women. Yet, several of the men did convey a change in their attitudes toward entertaining the possibility of teaching at the middle school level, even though this did not represent their first choice of job situations. George, for example, who had indicated no interest in teaching at the middle level at the beginning of the semester, rated his end of semester interest in teaching middle school as a "six" on a scale of "one" to "ten," "one" being no interest and "ten" being exclusive interest. During the field experience debriefing session he explained:

> Before I had really only thought about high school. I had really not honestly considered middle school. I never even thought about it. I'm still kind of in the middle or whatever; I don't think it would really matter to me as far as getting a job.

Although Ben still opted for a high school job, he ranked his current interest in teaching at the middle school level a "five." He said during his field experience debriefing session, "I had a great time, and before I was definitely a 'one.' I wanted nothing to do with middle school at all." John, who had initially balked at the idea of being forced to participate in a middle school field experience, ranked his interest in teaching at the middle level a "four" at the end of the semester, explaining:

> I have always leaned toward wanting to teach high school, as I want to coach high school athletics. So while I really learned something about teaching middle school through this experience, and I would not mind teaching middle school, I still have more of an urge to teach high school. If I get a middle school job, that would be fine, but I just prefer high school.

As a final example of the impact of the middle school field experience on committed future (male) high school teachers and coaches, Steve offered this explanation for his rank of "four" for his interest in teaching at the middle level:

> When I started [this course] I wouldn't have taught middle school, but [then] I had the field experience. If it wasn't for this class [my ranking] would have been a "one." I actually experienced what a middle school is like, [so] there is always the possibility.

Thus, although only one of the eight men from the key group would select a middle school position over a high school position, five of these men indicated they would no longer feel deflated if a middle school position represented their best or only opportunity, as they clearly might have felt at the beginning of the semester.

Among the female preservice teachers, some who intended to become middle school teachers found that the semester's experiences confirmed their choice. For example, Liz had been interested in middle school science due to a previous successful field experience, and after her most recent field experience she wrote:

> I loved my cooperating teacher and all the students were wonderful. It was encouraging to see such an active learning environment. I saw myself wanting to teach middle school more and more with every day I went back to teach.

Liz was particularly impressed with the biological content and lab work being done with the middle level students. She became convinced that her major in biology would not be wasted on middle school kids. Liz was one of only two key preservice teachers who spoke of opportunities for intellectual engagement with middle school students.

Sandra also wanted to teach middle school both before and after her experiences during the semester. Part of her reasoning, however, included a negative experience at a high school field placement for her English methods course. She found her field experience in the middle school to be "more fun."

In spite of an ineffective cooperating teacher, Michelle credited the field experience for her new interest in teaching at the middle level. Her end of the semester rating for teaching at the middle level was a "nine." She said, "Before I wanted to teach high school, but now I really don't. I totally changed my mind as a result of the field experience. I feel really positive."

April presented perhaps the most dramatic turn around. In the beginning of the semester, she stood firm in her desire to teach high school seniors. Her interest was in inspiring college aspirations among her students and providing them with the necessary prerequisite college-level writing skills. In her debriefing session she explained:

> I totally changed my mind. I thought I wanted to teach high school seniors and now I don't. The reason being I thought I could be most influential in getting kids ready for college. Now I realize that when they are younger that they are more impressionable. I can make the biggest difference at a younger age.

April went on to describe that inspiring a "love of learning" at the seventh grade level was more likely to lead to college aspirations. April made clear in her various reflections that she had been placed with an outstanding cooperating teacher and that she truly enjoyed the middle school students in her placement.

On the whole, the key participants demonstrated an increased interest in teaching at the middle level. They cited the field experience as the most influential factor leading to the increased interest. Many of the preservice teachers' comments, however, can also be read as improved perceptions of middle level students that reflect the in-class activities and the assignments that focused on the cultural constructions of early adolescence. In spite of such improved perceptions, however, a desire to support students through the perceived difficulties of adolescence remained the focus for most of the key preservice teachers hoping to teach at the middle level.

Discussion: The Assumption that Middle Level Students are Intellectually Lacking

This study's finding that preservice teachers generally perceive early adolescents as devoid of intellectual capacities confirms the results of Finders's study (1999). Given the data collected in this study, I was surprised that even many of the preservice teachers who expressed the strongest desire to teach at the middle level still often dismissed the possibility of intellectually engaging their students. The role of puberty in early adolescent development is apparently given the explanatory power for difficult behaviors. Another important finding that emerged in this study is that the preservice teachers who aim to teach at the middle level seem either to suffer from a lack of confidence in their own intellectual or academic competencies or appear to be called to the counseling role that they assume to be the key to good middle level teaching. This conclusion is significant in that it reflects a debate that has been playing out among education professionals for some time. This debate centers on the alleged over-emphasis on the social and emotional development of early adolescents in middle schools.

Partially in response to critics of the modern middle school movement, the authors of *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) offer a design system for the constructive and effective education of early adolescents which "combines an emphasis on developing young adolescents' intellectual capacities with opportunities to meet their emotional and interpersonal needs" (p. xii, in the foreword by David Hamburg). The authors justify this emphasis on intellectual development in the report's introduction by noting:

> Some would argue that it is unnecessary to assert the primacy of intellectual development in middle grades education. We believe it is necessary. It is necessary because critics of middle grades schools will otherwise continue to assert—wrongly—that middle grades educators do not believe their students are capable of significant intellectual achievement or that they believe it is more important to help students successfully traverse the emotional vicissitudes inherent in this developmental stage. (p. 11)

Although the authors of this report seem to deny the assertion that middle level educators are focused away from intellectual development, other reports make the opposite claim.

Bradley's 1998 article, "Muddle in the Middle," cites a report prepared by a citizen's review committee for the Howard County public schools in Maryland. The report concluded that an "Overemphasis on the social, emotional, and physical needs of the middle school student has led to the neglect of academic competencies. The result is a school system with vague academic expectations and complacency in the middle school years" (p.

38). This type of report perhaps represents the "critics of middle grades schools" mentioned by Jackson and Davis (2000) above. As Bradley further explains,

> Some [of the critics] also fault middle schools' emphasis on the developmental characteristics of young adolescents—their growth spurts, forgetfulness, disorganization, fear of failure, moodiness, and attachment to their peers—as providing an excuse not to teach them very much. (p. 40)

Bradley's article also contains the following remarks from M. Hayes Mizell, the director of the Program for Student Achievement at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation in New York City. This program works on projects centered on clear achievement standards for students. Bradley quotes Mizell as saying:

> Either the middle school movement overemphasized the affective and developmental, or their message was seriously misunderstood by practitioners in the field. I just kept having experience after experience where middle school educators would talk about the uniqueness of the kids or their caring for the kids, but you got no impression as to where kids were supposed to come out, in terms of what they know and can do. (p. 40)

Assumptions about the intellectual capacities (or lack thereof) of early adolescents are relevant and even critical to educators. Recent brain research indicates a second surge of brain development just prior to and during puberty, the first surge having long ago been confirmed as occurring during the first few years of life. The PBS documentary program, *Frontline,* aired an edition entitled "Inside the Teenage Brain" in February of 2002, which featured the work of Dr. Jay Giedd of the National Institutes of Mental Health in Bethesda, Maryland. According to Sarah Spinks, *Frontline's* producer:

> Giedd and his colleagues found that in an area of the brain called the prefrontal cortex, the brain appeared to be growing again just before puberty. The prefrontal cortex sits just behind the forehead. It is particularly interesting to scientists because it acts as the CEO of the brain, controlling planning, working memory, organization, and modulating mood. As the prefrontal cortex matures, teenagers can reason better, develop more control over impulses and make judgments better. In fact, this part of the brain has been dubbed "the area of sober second thought." (Changes in the Prefrontal Cortex section, para. 1)

This finding of growth in intellectual and rational brain function is particularly important in relation to my study. Study participants who plan to work in middle schools seem to discount early adolescents' ability to function intellectually at just the time early adolescents are in fact making huge leaps in brain development. According to Spinks (2002), brain researchers have not reached a clear consensus as to what this adolescent brain growth spurt means for parents and educators, yet she notes that:

> Giedd hypothesizes that the growth in gray matter followed by the pruning of connections is a particularly important stage of brain development in which what teens do or do not do can affect them for the rest of their lives. He calls this the "use it or lose it principle." (Changes in the Prefrontal Cortex section, para. 4)

Clearly, Giedd's position is that early adolescents need intellectual challenge if they are to maximize that potential for cognitive growth. This suggests that middle school is not the time to set aside concerns about intellectual development in favor of support for social and emotional development. Rather, intellectual capacities should be stretched, challenged, exercised, and developed during this period. Given my findings related to the preservice teachers' emphasis on the social and emotional development of middle school students over the intellectual development, this debate about what is most important to meet the needs of early adolescents should be waged in teacher education as well.

CONCLUSIONS

Preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with a variety of attitudes, values, and beliefs that are shaped by their past experiences and their wider culture (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984). Furthermore, if, as Giroux (1983) posits, social institutions such as schools and universities, and by extension schools of education, reflect and embody the values, history, and practices of the wider society, then it becomes imperative that teacher education programs examine ways they reify culturally accepted understandings about schools and students. Several scholars contend that cultural constructions of adolescence have led to negative conceptions of youth in general (Lesko, 1996, 2001) and early adolescents in particular (Adams, 1997; Finders, 1999). These scholars call into question the prevailing developmental framework for understanding adolescence because it relies on puberty to explain the negative behaviors of youth. The developmental framework seems to allow for the cultural image of middle schoolers to be little more than mindless hormones in sneakers.

My study aimed to assist preservice teachers in challenging the dominant assumptions about early adolescents in our culture, or what Adams (1997) calls the master narrative of adolescence. The key preservice teachers participating in the study were encouraged to look beyond the master narrative that presents early adolescents as bundles of raging hormones incapable of intellectual endeavors and in need of social control. The key study participants looked for consistencies with and contradictions to the cultural assumptions when they wrote autobiographies, read articles providing a cultural and historical context for adolescence, viewed a video counter example, and developed case studies of middle school students. Working directly with early adolescents in a middle school field experience also aided the preservice teachers in their search for new meanings.

Overall, my findings support the assertion that secondary education majors harbor negative perceptions of middle level students (Finders, 1999), but their reasons for avoiding teaching at the middle level go beyond such negative perceptions alone. In fact, perceptions of *self* loomed large as a determinant for grade level teaching preferences. For example, an analysis of their reasoning for grade level teaching preferences and an analysis of their response to Arnett's (2001) concept of "emerging adulthood" (p. 14) revealed a strong preoccupation with their own closeness in age to their would-be students as a powerful predictor of grade level teaching preference. Closeness in age was seen as either an asset or an obstacle, depending on the preservice teacher's confidence in his or her subject matter content knowledge and interest in being seen by his or her future students as a peer or an authority figure. My evidence also showed that most preservice teachers in the study, even those enthusiastic about working with middle schoolers, see early adolescents as intellectually incompetent.

Ultimately, while some of the characterizations of early adolescents were "disturbed" for the key preservice teachers during the course of the semester, this notion of middle school students as intellectually incapable was not. While there was success in attracting some of the key preservice teachers to middle level education through advocacy and opportunities to work with middle level students, their reported reasons for their interest in this level suggested they maintained an image of early adolescents as psychologically needy and intellectually disinterested. The preservice teachers expressing a desire to work in the middle level claimed they wanted to support middle schoolers through the physical, emotional, and social difficulties inherent in this developmental stage. So, while the key group of preservice teachers appeared to attribute more positive characteristics to early adolescents by the end of the semester, it became evident that the developmental or biological view still fully framed their understandings about the adolescent experience.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Findings of this study suggest that negative social conceptions of early adolescents as well as preservice teacher self-confidence impact the career choices of preservice secondary teachers. Without intervention, few secondary education majors in the study were aiming for middle school teaching as a career choice. Results indicate that if middle level schools are to have excellent, committed middle level teachers, then schools of education with large, generic elementary and secondary education programs would need to develop programs to specifically recruit and specially prepare teachers for the middle level. This suggestion is consistent with recommendations made by the National Middle School Association (1995) as well as with those of widely known middle level education advocates (George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992; Hart, 1995; Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995; McEwin, Dickinson, Erb, & Scales, 1995; Scales, 1994; Scales & McEwin, 1994). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) established standards for middle level programs in 1990 (Swaim & Stefanich, 1996).

Those individuals who are predisposed to teach middle school students should be encouraged and offered opportunities to become experts in teaching at this level. One of my concerns, however, is specific to recruiting middle level teachers. Participants in this study needed exposure to middle level students, schools, and concepts to kindle an interest in becoming middle school teachers. The presence of a specialized program erases the invisibility that exists surrounding the middle level in teacher education (McEwin & Dickinson, 1995). Teacher candidates would be exposed to the possibility of teaching at the middle level, a possibility they may not have ever previously considered.

In addition to offering a specialized program for preparing middle level teachers, schools of education should ensure that persons entertaining the idea of studying education should be exposed early on to one or more middle school advocates. Those who are hired to teach in specialized middle level programs should be experts in the field, rather than current faculty members who are elementary or secondary generalists without particular middle level knowledge and experience. The first step in recruiting future middle level educators is providing teacher candidates with opportunities to interact with faculty and practitioners who enjoy working with early adolescents. These faculty members and practitioners should be knowledgeable about both the developmental and culturally constructed characteristics of this age group, along with the best practices to meet their needs. Every school of education should have middle level advocates and experts, and those advocates and experts need to recognize their unique challenges regarding the issue of recruitment.

Finally, I recommend a series of topics that could be addressed with preservice teachers, especially those enrolled in middle level programs. The goal would be for specific aspects of Adams's (1997), Finders's (1999), and Lesko's (1996, 2001) analyses to be introduced to future middle level practitioners who might then carry on the middle school movement with less reliance on the developmental framework for understanding adolescence. Preservice teachers should be exposed explicitly to the master narrative of early adolescence (Adams, 1997), the language of exceptionality often used when describing early adolescents (Finders, 1999), the intellectual capacities of early adolescents (Spinks, 2002), and the concept of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2001).

Early adolescence was approached in this study as a "cultural construction" (Adams, 1997; Finders, 1999; Lesko, 1996, 2001) wherein most members of our culture harbor negative conceptions of early adolescents and view them as being at an especially problematic stage of development. Preservice teachers appear to be no exception. Schools of education are in a unique position to help future teachers disturb current images of middle school students by introducing and directly teaching about various frameworks for understanding adolescence. Encouraging preservice teachers to examine the early adolescent experience through multiple lenses will likely lead to more productive and positive ways of seeing and working with middle school students.

If a cultural analysis can be brought to bear within the context of a preservice teacher education program involving specialized attention to preparing middle level practitioners, perhaps some of the dependence on the developmental framework for understanding adolescence will give way. While certain steps, like the ones taken in this research project, might lead to an increased level of enthusiasm for and interest in teaching at the middle level, direct exploration of a constructivist framework for understanding adolescence through some of the topics suggested here might lead to a raised level of consciousness as to the nature of our attitudes toward middle school students. Teacher education, therefore, becomes a crucial place to begin chipping away at our culture's negative perceptions of middle level students, schools, and teaching as well as a place to develop critical sensibilities about taken-for-granted ways of understanding and viewing the world.

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CHAPTER 3

PREPARING MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHERS IN FIELD-BASED COHORTS

Micki M. Caskey
Portland State University

ABSTRACT

Overwhelming evidence supports the specialized professional preparation of middle level teachers; however, many teacher education institutions have yet to provide specific middle level programs. Reasons for the scarcity of dedicated middle level teacher preparation programs include licensure requirements and funding to establish additional programs. To respond to the pressing need for a specialized program for middle level teachers, a large urban teacher education institution implemented a field-based model within its graduate teacher preparation program. This study examined the effects of a field-based model on twenty-seven middle level teachers who were prepared in three consecutive field-based cohorts. Components of the model included extensive field experience, school-based coursework, cohort structure, and collaborative partnerships. Data sources included attitude surveys, individual interviews, and group interviews. Results indicated that the middle level teachers in these field-based cohorts had positive attitudes toward their preparation in a field-based model. Emergent themes centered upon middle

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level teachers' perceptions of the model's coherence, the middle school culture, young adolescents' needs, components of the model, classroom management, and university-school partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education institutions are charged with designing and implementing programs that prepare teachers to work with children at different developmental levels. Teachers of young adolescents need specialized professional preparation (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995; National Middle School Association, 1999). However, many teacher education institutions have yet to establish specific middle level programs. Among the reasons for this lack of specialization at the middle level are state licensure requirements and costs associated with initiating and sustaining an additional program. The problem is reconciling the urgent need for specialized preparation of middle level teachers with the limited resources of teacher education institutions.

The overarching purpose of the study described in this chapter was to examine the effects of a field-based model for middle level teachers in an existent graduate level teacher education program at an urban university in the northwest United States. The study explored the perceptions of middle level teachers who were prepared in three consecutive field-based cohorts. Specific goals of the study included: (a) identifying middle level teachers' attitudes toward field-based teacher preparation, (b) discerning the impact of field-based teacher preparation on middle level teachers, and (c) developing a model for a specialized, middle level teacher education program. Other areas of investigation were middle level teachers' beliefs about their readiness to teach in a middle school and the factors that enhanced or impeded middle level teachers' preparation.

Review of the Literature

Teacher education has been the target of significant education reform efforts (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; The Holmes Group, 1986, 1995; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). During the 1980s, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching (1986) and the Holmes Group (1986) called upon higher education institutions to improve teacher preparation by requiring greater content area competence and by providing a stronger grounding in pedagogical skills. Both the Carnegie and Holmes Group reports proposed extending professional teacher preparation programs. Some teacher education institutions responded by establishing fifth-year graduate programs with features such as cohort organization, reflective practice, and expanded field experiences. Nevertheless, a decade later the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) found that issues of inadequate program length and fragmented curricula still plagued many teacher preparation programs. The Commission's specific recommendations for teacher education included: (1) linking standards for teachers to standards for students, and (2) reinventing teacher preparation and professional development (p. 11). Persistent attention to teacher education prompted many institutions to transform their preparation programs.

To link standards for teachers to standards for students, both types of standards have to be well developed and clearly defined. Creating a coherent set of standards for teachers and teaching has been the shared goal of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Each organization drafted standards to "guide education, entry into the field, and ongoing practice" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 63). The NCATE and INTASC standards targeted teacher education programs, while the NBPTS focused on standards of accomplished teaching. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) proposed this continuum of standards for both preservice and accomplished teachers to assure teacher quality (p. 29).

In addition, the Commission recommended that higher education institutions and K–12 schools organize teacher education and professional development around standards for teachers and students (p. 11). As with standards for teachers, standards for students have been at the center of educational reform for the past decade. As professional organizations and state departments of education developed content standards for students, schools worked to implement those standards. To help students meet the new standards, the Commission asserted the following priority: determine what teachers should know and be able to do in order to teach to high standards (p. 67).

To reinvent teacher preparation, schools of education explored several dimensions of their preservice programs. Importantly, in 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future endorsed expansive yearlong internships for preservice teachers (p. 77). In some instances, institutions of higher education adopted field-based teacher education programs to afford preservice teachers with more consistent and extensive experience in schools.

A field-based teacher education model situates preservice teacher preparation in the schools. Two features are central to a field-based model: (1)

extensive field experiences, and (2) school-based coursework. Field-based models provide preservice teachers with an entire academic year of school-based experiences, a dramatic increase over the 12- to 15-week student teaching allotment in traditional, university-based programs. Field-based models also position university coursework (from one class to all classes) in the schools rather than on the university campus. School-based coursework requires collaboration among school and university faculty who co-plan and co-teach the preservice teachers. Immersion in the field helps preservice teachers to connect educational theory and practice (Caskey, 2000).

Numerous teacher educators and researchers acknowledge the strengths and limitations of field-based models in teacher education (Caskey, 2000; Duquette, 1997; Elmore, 1979; Hayes, 2002; Tollefson, Frey, Englebrick, & Sloop, 2000; Whitehead, Hutchinson, Munby, Lock, & Martin, 1999). Strengths of field-based approaches include: (a) increased time for preservice teachers in schools, (b) integration of academic coursework and field experience, (c) depth of relationships among preservice teachers and school personnel, and (d) increased levels of preservice teacher confidence. Greater time in the school allows preservice teachers to be immersed in the school culture, which expands their understanding of school systems (Caskey, 2000). Researchers also note limitations such as clarity of university and field expectations and additional time commitments required for collaboration among university and school faculty and between preservice and classroom teachers. The limitations of field-based approaches, however, are not considered to be insurmountable.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future challenges institutions of higher education to design programs that offer prospective teachers intellectually demanding coursework and extensive field experiences in collaboration with schools (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Recent evidence confirms that teacher education programs that connect extended field experience with coursework on teaching and learning prepare more effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). A field-based approach to teacher preparation apparently presents a viable route to "reinventing" teacher preparation programs as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future recommended (1996, p. 35). Field-based teacher preparation programs have the potential to capitalize on the unique perspectives and professional expertise of both schools of education and public schools (Caskey, 2000; Munby, 1999; Wiseman & Nason, 1995; Zeichner, 1980). Such collegial practice entails ongoing communication and collaboration that can lead to authentic partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school sites.

In fact, collaborative partnerships in teacher education are among the essential program elements for specialized middle level teacher preparation (McEwin & Dickinson, 1997; National Middle School Association, 1999). As teacher educators, faculty members at universities and middle schools share responsibility for the site-based components of specialized middle level programs (McEwin & Dickinson, 1997, p. 225). Both university and school faculties need to work together in planning, implementing, teaching, and evaluating the effectiveness of the middle level program (National Middle School Association, 1999). An exemplar of successful collaboration is the Middle Level Program at California State University, San Marcos (McDaniel, Rios, & Stowell, 1995). This school-based program affords prospective middle level teachers with opportunities to interact with middle school students and teachers on a regular basis (p. 59). Accordingly, collaborative partnerships warrant special emphasis in middle level teacher preparation.

As part of specialized professional preparation, teacher education programs need to provide middle level preservice teachers with extensive field experiences in middle schools (Butler, Davies, & Dickinson, 1991; Manning, 1993; Scales, & McEwin, 1994). Middle level teacher education advocates (McEwin & Dickinson, 1995, 1997; McEwin, Dickinson, Erb, & Scales, 1995) recommend early and continuing field experiences in the middle grades for prospective middle level teachers. Jackson and Davis (2000) suggest, "Fieldwork by prospective middle level teachers should follow a pattern of increasing complexity and involvement, culminating in an extensive internship or practicum during which prospective teachers are responsible for groups of young adolescents" (p. 100). During a continuum of field experiences, preservice teachers have expansive opportunities to apply their understanding of young adolescents.

Despite the evidence that teachers of young adolescents need specialized preparation (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995; McEwin, Dickinson, & Hamilton, 2000; National Middle School Association, 1999), many schools of education have yet to launch specialized middle level programs. A fundamental reason for the dearth of specialized middle level preparation programs is teacher licensure requirements (McEwin & Dickinson, 1997, p. 225). The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform (2002) asserts, "Specialized teacher preparation will not become the norm until middle-level licensure is universally required" (p. 2). Though 86 percent of all states offer some form of middle level credential, only 42 percent require middle level licensure to teach in middle school classrooms (p. 4). The National Middle School Association (1999) contends that middle level licensure requirements closely relate to the number of teacher education institutions with specialized middle level programs. Since state licensure requirements essentially dictate the nature of teacher preparation programs, middle level education advocates need to work with state licensure agencies on mandates for middle level licensure. "Only then will teacher preparation institutions be compelled to offer comprehensive middle level programs, and will teachers of young adolescents have the specialized preparation they need in order to become effective teachers" (National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002, p. 2). Regardless of inconsistent licensure requirements for middle level teachers, higher education institutions must develop and sustain specialized middle level programs.

Research reports reveal that the number of specialized middle level programs has grown steadily at the graduate level. For example, a survey of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education specifies that the percentage of graduate level programs with middle level specialization increased from 52% in 1982 to 71% in 1991 (McEwin & Dickinson, 1995, p. 6). Evidently, specific middle level preparation in fifth-year graduate teacher education programs is flourishing. This recent research builds upon earlier reports (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching, 1986; The Holmes Group, 1986, 1995) that recommended extending professional teacher preparation programs. Darling-Hammond (1999) supports the development of fifth-year programs that connect yearlong internships or field experiences with rigorous coursework on learning and teaching. For middle level preservice teachers, the yearlong school-based experience provides continual opportunities to learn from practice in middle schools.

In addition to extending professional teacher preparation programs, The Holmes Group (1986, 1995) recommends a cohort-based approach in teacher education programs. Cohort-based approaches create communities of learners by organizing preservice teachers into small groups whose members learn and work together during their formal preparation programs. Cohorts provide intellectual and social support throughout the teacher preparation program and encourage the continued collegial interaction necessary for professional growth. Recent research (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Bullough, Clark, & Wentworth, 2001) explicates the positive effects of cohorts. For example, cohorts provide prospective teachers with collaborative and interdependent learning experiences. Cohorts also instill an increased sense of belonging and help to socialize preservice teachers into the teaching profession. Importantly, cohorts of prospective teachers have the potential to work together in ways similar to teams of middle school teachers who collaborate to establish student-centered learning communities for young adolescents. Middle level education programs need to consider the value of cohorts in preparing middle level teachers (Arhar & Crowe, 2002).

To summarize, middle level teachers warrant specialized professional preparation (National Middle School Association, 1999). Promising practices for specialized middle level preparation include graduate level programs and field-based cohorts.

METHODS

This study examined the perceptions of middle level teachers who were prepared in field-based cohorts within an existent graduate teacher education program. Key research questions addressed by the study included: (1) What components of the field-based teacher education model enhance or impede middle level teachers' preparation? (2) What do middle level teachers identify as important components of their preparation program? Specific goals of the study included: (a) identifying middle level teachers' attitudes toward field-based teacher preparation, (b) discerning the impact of field-based teacher preparation on middle level teachers, and (c) developing a model for a specialized middle level teacher education program. This study was part of a larger research project that explored the views of K–12 teachers who were prepared in field-based cohorts.

The researcher used a mixed method design (Creswell, 2002) including the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data on middle level teachers' perceptions. Selection of the mixed method design allowed the researcher to utilize the strengths of one data source to offset the weaknesses of another data source (Creswell, 2002, p. 565). In utilizing this design, the researcher attempted to merge the generalizability of quantitative data with the contextual richness of qualitative data. To explore middle level teachers' perceptions of their preparation, the researcher used three sources: surveys, individual interviews, and group interviews.

The following sections describe the existent graduate teacher preparation program, components of the field-based model, and participants in this field-based study. Subsequent sections elaborate on data collection and analysis.

Graduate Level Preparation Program

The existent graduate teacher preparation program is an intensive, one-year initial teacher licensure program. Preservice teachers complete 35 graduate credits of coursework (10 courses) and 21 graduate credits of field experience (student teaching) for a total of 56 graduate credits that span four consecutive quarters. During the student teaching experiences, preservice teachers complete two work samples that document the preservice teachers' ability to plan, teach, and assess a unit of study. Fulfillment of the program's course and fieldwork components leads to a recommendation for an initial teaching licensure. Though not a program requirement, many prospective teachers assemble an initial teaching portfolio as part of the Reflective Practitioner course. Completion of the graduate teacher preparation program and an additional 10 graduate credits comprise the Graduate School of Education's Masters in Education (M.Ed.).

Program faculty use competitive admissions processes to select preservice teachers who are academically serious and possess substantive content knowledge. Selection criteria for program admissions include the candidate's undergraduate grade point average, standardized test scores of basic academic skills and content area knowledge, statement of professional goals, recommendations from those knowledgeable about the candidate's experiences with children and academic potential, and performance on a group problem-solving activity. The program's application gathers preliminary information about candidate's preferences among the state's four authorization levels for licensure: early childhood (ages 3 to grade 4), elementary (grades 3–8), middle level (grades 5–9), and high school (grades 7–12). Lacking a specialized middle level pathway, the graduate program admits middle level candidates to elementary, secondary, or K–12 cohorts.

For three consecutive years, the graduate teacher preparation program prepared middle level candidates in K–12 cohorts. This cohort configuration positioned middle level preservice teachers alongside their elementary and secondary counterparts. The K–12 field-based cohorts emphasized the unique developmental levels of children, rather than the overlapping nature of teacher licensure.

Field-based Model

The field-based teacher education model provided preservice teachers with a yearlong experience in the schools. This field-based model met or exceeded the requirements of the approved graduate teacher preparation program. Components of this field-based model included extensive field experience, school-based coursework, cohort structure, and collaborative partnerships.

Extensive Field Experience

Extensive clinical experiences in this field-based model afforded preservice teachers with more than 30 weeks of practice teaching, which doubled the amount of time required by the state for initial teacher licensure. The field-based model immersed preservice teachers in the public school culture, a departure from the conventional approach that gradually increased preservice teachers' field experiences from one or two days a week to full-time student teaching. Field experiences in the field-based model included

750 hours of supervised student teaching and more than 300 hours of school-based practica versus the conventional graduate program with 600 hours of supervised student teaching and about 100 hours of practica experience. This field-based model fostered a seamless progression of field experiences from the initial practica to full-time student teaching. It required preservice teachers to begin their fieldwork on the first day of practicing teachers' pre-planning in the fall and continue their work in the schools until the final day of post-planning in late spring or early summer.

School-based Coursework

An integral part of the field-based teacher education model was school-based coursework. The majority of university coursework and all professional development opportunities occurred within a public school district. University and school faculty members planned and taught the school-based classes. For instance, instructors modeled instructional methods and designed assignments that compelled preservice teachers to not only apply the methods, but also to reflect upon their teaching experiences. Preservice teachers noted their observations, thoughts, and questions in reflective journals and participated regularly in online discussions. In addition, instructors assigned projects that required preservice teachers to work cooperatively on curricular projects and to integrate technology into their teaching practice. Importantly, school and university faculty members worked deliberately to help preservice teachers connect theory and practice.

Cohort Structure

The field-based model, like the existing graduate teacher preparation program, arranged candidates in cohorts. Though not unique to the field-based model, the cohort structure fostered academic and social support for the program's preservice teachers. The field-based cohort had approximately thirty members and two faculty leaders. The faculty leaders designed collaborative and interdependent learning experiences for cohort members. Notably, the field-based cohort shared a common field-based emphasis and worked collectively as a community of learners.

Collaborative Partnerships

The field-based model relied upon collaborative partnerships among the public schools, the local school district, and the university. School and university partners agreed to situate the majority of university coursework in the school district and place clusters of preservice teachers in the schools. Ongoing collaboration enhanced the connection between coursework and field experience and helped to bridge theory and practice. Planned and evaluated cooperatively, the field-based teacher education model tapped the unique perspectives and professional expertise of school personnel and university faculty.

Participants

The participants in the study were 27 middle level teachers who had been prepared in three consecutive field-based cohorts. The number of middle level teachers varied by cohort. In Cohort I, 7 of 29 (24%) had been prepared as middle level teachers. Members of Cohort I completed the program in 1999 and were in their second year of middle school teaching at the time of the study. Next, in Cohort II, 11 of 29 teachers (38%) had been prepared to teach at the middle level. Cohort II teachers completed the program in 2000 and were in their first year of teaching. In Cohort III, 9 of 27 preservice teachers (33%) had been prepared for middle level teaching. Cohort III members completed the program in 2001 and had yet to start teaching at the time of this study. Of the 85 preservice teachers who completed their preparation program in the three consecutive field-based cohorts, 27 (32%) sought licensure at the middle level. With smaller enrollment numbers, a K–12 configuration was a feasible way to provide targeted preparation for middle level teachers. Notably, all 27 middle level teachers agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection

The researcher sought middle level teachers' perceptions of their field-based teacher preparation program using three data-gathering instruments: surveys, individual interviews, and group interviews. Data from these sources enabled the researcher to examine the effects of a field-based model on preservice teachers (Cohort III) and novice teachers (Cohorts I & II) who had been prepared to teach at the middle level in an urban university in the northwest United States. These three sources of data hopefully strengthen the research findings.

The researcher developed the Field-Based Teacher Preparation Survey (see Appendix A) to gather information about teachers' attitudes toward the field-based approach. The researcher selected survey methodology after reviewing evaluation methods used to measure participant satisfaction in specialized middle level and field-based preparation programs (Giebelhaus, 1998; Whitehead, Hutchinson, Munby, Lock, & Martin, 1999). Following a pilot study, the researcher administered the Field-Based Teacher Preparation Survey to members of the three field-based cohorts. The survey included 15 items that used a Likert-type scale of five choices:

strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The survey concluded with five open-ended questions for participants' elaborative responses. The survey also gathered information regarding school district placement, licensure authorization levels (early childhood, elementary, middle level, high school), and endorsement area (e.g., art, language arts, foreign language, mathematics, music, social studies, science).

Cohorts I and II received the Field-Based Teacher Preparation Surveys in the mail. Following an e-mail reminder and a second mailing, all 18 participants in those two cohorts returned the surveys. Members of Cohort III completed the survey in their final student teaching seminar. In total, participants submitted 27 surveys for data analysis.

To clarify and explore participants' survey responses, the researcher conducted a round of individual and group interviews with preservice and novice middle level teachers ($N = 9$) who volunteered to participate further in the study. A semi-structured interview protocol with five open-ended questions (see Appendix B) guided the interview sessions. The researcher used purposeful sampling to select one participant from each cohort for the individual interviews ($N = 3$) and two participants from each cohort for the group interview sessions ($N = 6$). This sampling procedure ensured equal representation from each of the three field-based cohorts. Though the researcher offered to conduct the interviews at public school sites, the participants preferred coming to the university for the interviews. After the researcher conducted each 30-minute interview session, a graduate assistant transcribed the tape-recorded sessions. Subsequently, the researcher verified the accuracy of the verbatim transcripts. Participants' responses from these interview sessions provided additional insights into the field-based model.

Data Analysis

Data analysis varied by the type of responses gathered. First, the researcher computed frequency counts and percent of agreement for the Likert-type items of the Field-Based Teacher Preparation Survey. Next, the researcher carefully read and reread the responses from the open-ended items of the survey and the transcripts of the interview sessions. Persistent themes surfaced, and the researcher systematically coded the data in terms of these themes. After this initial round of coding, the researcher differentiated categories and identified emergent themes. A final reevaluation of data from the open-ended items supported these major themes.

To validate the accuracy of the findings, the researcher used member checking and triangulation (Creswell, 2002). The member checking process required the researcher to ask one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account (p. 280), while triangulation entailed comparing evidence from the survey and interview data. Use of verbatim quotes also helped to ensure the dependability of the findings.

RESULTS

Analyses of data revealed that the middle level teachers in this study have a positive view of their preparation in field-based cohorts. This section initially describes findings from the survey and interview data. Subsequently, the section addresses themes from the systematic evaluation of the data.

Survey

Middle level teachers' responses on the Field-Based Teacher Preparation Survey showed positive outcomes for preparation in field-based cohorts. In the first part of the survey, teachers indicated their level of agreement (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) with 15 statements. To determine the level of agreement, the researcher combined the percentages of the strongly agree and agree categories. In general, the middle level teachers had positive perceptions of the field-based approach with levels of agreement ranging from 71% to 100% (see Table 3.1), and an overall mean of 93%. An inspection of responses by cohort groups (preservice, first-year, and second-year teachers) revealed commonalities and differences.

Regardless of teaching experience, survey responses showed agreement across cohort groups for the following statements:

- I believe that extensive field experiences help me to become a better teacher.
- Learning to teach from experience is an advantage of the field-based teacher education approach.
- The field-based teacher education approach helps me to reflect on my own teaching.
- I can identify specifically my areas of strength as a teacher.
- I can identify areas that I need to develop further as a teacher.

When responding to these statements, the middle level teachers in the three cohorts had an agreement level of 100%.

However, differences across cohort groups existed. Middle level teachers' discrepant responses highlighted the variation in their perceptions of the field-based teacher education model. First-year teachers responded more favorably than preservice or second-year teachers to statements

Table 3.1. Perceptions of Field-based Teacher Education Approach

	*Levels of Agreement**		
Field-based Teacher Preparation Survey Items	*Preservice Teacher*	*1st Year Teacher*	*2nd Year Teacher*
I like the field-based teacher education approach employed by the university and school district.	89	91	100
The field-based teacher education approach helps me to examine my own assumptions as a teacher.	89	100	86
I think that extensive fieldwork affords me the time to become the kind of teacher that I want to be.	82	89	100
I am confident that I have the knowledge and competencies needed for a successful teaching career.	89	91	100
I believe that extensive field experiences help me to become a better teacher.	100	100	100
The field-based teacher education approach enables me to work with and learn from my colleagues.	100	100	71
Student and cooperating teacher relationships are fostered in the field-based education approach.	78	82	86
Learning to teach from experience is an advantage of the field-based teacher education approach.	100	100	100
The field-based teacher education approach helps me to reflect on my own teaching.	100	100	100
The field-based teacher education approach allows me to reach some of my own professional goals.	100	91	86
I feel a strong sense of community with members of my field-based teacher cohort.	88	82	77
The field-based approach permits me to contribute significantly to the public school's culture.	76	91	71
I can identify specifically my areas of strength as a teacher.	100	100	100
I can identify areas that I need to develop further as a teacher.	100	100	100
I would recommend the field-based teacher education approach to other students.	89	100	100

*Levels of agreement were calculated by adding the strongly agree and agree categories

regarding teacher assumptions and contributions to the public school culture. With regard to the statement about examining their own assumptions as teachers, the first-year teachers' level of agreement was 100%, while preservice and second-year teachers' levels of agreement were lower at 89% and 86%, respectively. Similarly, the first-year teachers reported a 91% level of agreement about contributing to the school's culture, whereas the level of agreement was 76% for preservice teachers and 71% for second-year teachers.

With more teaching experience, middle level teachers' agreement levels increased for statements that addressed preference for the field-based approach, self-awareness, confidence, and classroom teacher relationships. As indicated by higher agreement levels, the second-year teachers liked and recommended the field-based model more than the first-year or preservice teachers. The most experienced teachers also reported a 100% agreement level for these statements: "Extensive fieldwork affords me the time to become the kind of teacher that I want to be," and "I am confident that I have the knowledge and competencies needed for a successful teaching career," while preservice and first-year teachers had lower agreement levels. In addition, second-year middle level teachers' agreement levels indicated their perception that a field-based model fostered the relationship between the student teacher and classroom teacher.

In other instances, levels of agreement decreased with teaching experience as seen in middle level teachers' responses to statements about collegial work and professional development. For example, preservice and first-year teachers reported higher levels of agreement for working and learning from their colleagues than the second-year teachers. Likewise, teachers' responses about having a "strong sense of community" with their cohort dropped each year as evidenced by declining levels of agreement from 88% for preservice teachers to 82% for the first-year teacher and 77% for the second-year teachers. Middle level teachers' also reported diminishing levels of agreement with regard to the field-based approach allowing them to reach their own professional goals.

Middle level teachers' survey responses seem to affirm the productive nature of teacher preparation in field-based cohorts. Their overall responses indicated that extensive field experience was a benefit of the field-based teacher education model. They asserted that the model helped them to become better teachers and reflect upon their own teaching. With regard to cohort organization, preservice teachers emphasized the value of being in a cohort more than the novice teachers. While the importance of cohort membership waned with teaching experience, being in a cohort apparently was very important for preservice teachers in the field-based program.

In the second part of the survey, middle level teachers' responses to five open-ended questions addressed characteristics and advantages of preparation in field-based cohorts. Preservice teachers (Cohort III) wanted to retain "spending as much time as possible in the schools," "having the whole year to see the changes in students," and "being in the classroom from the first day of school." Novice teachers in Cohorts I and II agreed that expansive field experience was a feature to preserve. A second-year middle level teacher stated,

> I think the most important characteristic was the opportunity to see the ups and downs and cycles of the school year. Watching students' behaviors and teachers' practices enabled me to be successful in a stressful school situation because I was able to draw on past experiences.

Members from all three field-based cohorts made similar statements that supported a yearlong immersion in the field.

The study's participants also highlighted instructional practices in their survey responses. Both preservice and novice teachers recommended that cooperative learning and classroom management activities be continued so that prospective teachers have an entire year to practice and experiment with techniques in a safe, collaborative environment. They recalled specific informal cooperative learning strategies (e.g., Think-Pair-Share) as well as collaborative work on curriculum and technology assignments. The participants' responses also pointed to features of the field-based model that needed to be modified. For example, preservice (Cohort III) and novice teachers (Cohorts I & II) found the 35 graduate credits of coursework to be excessive while they were immersed in the field. Despite their perception that the coursework was disproportionate, members from each cohort wanted more classroom management and subject area methods classes.

Among the aspects of the field-based model that were most advantageous for middle level teachers were "watching the relationships grow between you and your students" and "allowing me to become a part of the school/classroom culture." With regard to professional development, one novice teacher from Cohort I revealed a common sentiment: "The full year program...gave me the confidence and readiness for the year to come." When asked about what was most important, preservice teachers' responses included "having a group to share experiences with" and "receiving support from others who know what you're going through." In contrast, novice teachers (Cohorts I & II) reported that the amount of time in the classroom, the emphasis on curriculum preparation (work sample), and modeling by cohort leaders and instructors regarding classroom techniques were most important.

Individual and Group Interviews

The researcher conducted three individual and six group interviews at the university in a small classroom. In each session, the researcher posed the five open-ended questions (Appendix B) to clarify teachers' survey responses and to further explore dimensions of the field-based model. Questions encouraged the preservice and novice middle level teachers to describe beneficial experiences, readiness for public school teaching, field-based model strengths, areas for improvement in the field-based model, and reasons to recommend the field-based model. Preservice and novice middle level teachers commented favorably on the connection with classroom teachers, program cohesiveness, and their awareness of school operations. They cited being part of the school's community and a team as unique and beneficial experiences. One novice teacher noted,

> I appreciated being there from the beginning. We were planning curriculum, and I could make suggestions. I was respected as a professional all of a sudden. I got to interact as a professional, which I don't think might have happened if I wasn't at all the staff meetings and the little planning meetings. But you know, being in the field-based program, being there the whole time, I got to do that. I was part of a team, you know, and I was accepted.

Others expressed comfort at having first hand knowledge of public school events like open house, parent conferences, and meetings. Characterizing middle level teachers' views of their readiness for the realities of public school teaching, one first-year teacher stated, "I knew what it was going to be like." Similarly, middle level teachers from all three cohorts disclosed that work in the field-based model helped them to develop interpersonal skills needed to build relationships with other adults.

When asked what worked well in the field-based cohorts, the middle level teachers provided some specific insights. A preservice teacher commented, "The approach plunges us into the teacher culture." A first-year teacher said, "I feel like I was totally prepared. I was way prepared," while another first-year teacher added, "You walk in with a lot more confidence." A second-year teacher recalled, "I got used to working that many hours, so I knew what was involved in teaching." They noted observing best practices and having opportunities to try out instructional strategies and routines in a nurturing environment.

Middle level teachers offered a number of reasons to recommend the field-based approach for teacher preparation. First, the field-based model provided teachers with multiple opportunities to learn from their observations and teaching practice. A first-year teacher commented, "I think being in the school that much was good. Being able to see the opening, like before school actually started." Another first-year teacher agreed, "You got to see what teachers did to get ready for their classrooms and the paperwork involved. You saw them in action, teaching. And, then you got to teach." Second, the cohort configuration fostered collegial connections among the teachers throughout the field-based program. Additionally, the novice teachers asserted two other strengths related to planning processes:

preparing the work samples for student teaching and assembling an initial teaching portfolio. A second-year teacher recalled, "In our cohort, after we did our work samples, we shared them with others. We showed our best practices." A first-year teacher emphasized, "I really appreciated that teaching portfolio even though at the time I was moaning and groaning about it. I had to put together another one this year and having had that experience in the cohort made the difference."

In retrospect, the novice middle level teachers asserted that reflection and self-evaluation were central not only to the process of developing work samples and the teaching portfolio, but also to the process of teaching young adolescents. As a first-year teacher noted, "Because we had to do it all the time, I got in the habit of reflecting at the end of each day. You know, I could figure out ways to reach my kids."

However, interviewed teachers were generally dissatisfied with the classroom management component. Common suggestions included "have classroom management taught across every quarter" and "we could have used more classroom management from day one." A second-year teacher lamented, "I wish we had more classroom management, like almost all year." Additionally, some novice teachers recalled their disappointment with subject area methods coursework. A first-year teacher explained, ""Our methods were very sporadic. Science and social studies were very disjointed. It was hard for us to see anything." Another first-year teacher agreed, "I wanted to have more; I wanted to get a class that helped me teach math." As a final point, one preservice teacher voiced, "I wish there could have been more middle school people in the cohort for me to share stories with."

Themes

Prevalent themes emerged and revealed that middle level teachers involved in this research: (1) were sensitive to coherence in the field-based model, (2) were cognizant of middle school culture, (3) were responsive to young adolescents' needs, (4) were favorably impressed with components of the field-based model, (5) were attentive to classroom management, and (6) had a heightened awareness of university-school partnerships.

Coherence in the field-based teacher education model refers to how well the field experiences and coursework aspects of the model logically connected. Those prepared in the field-based cohorts were sensitive to linkages between coursework and field experiences and noted the clarity of expectations from university and school faculty members. Importantly, they searched for connections among theories of learning and essential teaching practices. Extensive field experiences, school-based coursework, cohort configuration, and multiple opportunities for reflection allowed this group of middle level teachers to grapple with ideas, learn from their observations and experiences, and evaluate their own teaching.

Middle level teachers involved in this study were cognizant of the culture of middle schools. In a yearlong field experience, they became members of the middle school community. Prospective middle level teachers saw clearly the real issues that confront middle school teachers and administrators. They witnessed the extraordinary efforts of some practitioners to renew and improve middle schools, and expressed concern about those places that have not embraced middle level philosophy.

Responsiveness to young adolescents' needs characterized both the preservice and novice middle level teachers who were prepared in the three field-based cohorts. They built and valued relationships with the young adolescents in their classrooms and schools. They benefited from numerous opportunities to select learning goals, plan instruction, and develop assessments that are appropriate for young adolescents at varied developmental levels.

Middle level teachers in this study were positive about components of the field-based model. They identified yearlong field experience, cohort structure, and collaboration as hallmarks of their preparation. In retrospect, the novice teachers mentioned their preference for the field-based model and the experiences the model afforded them as preservice teachers. The novice middle level teachers also recommended the continued use of the field-based model of teacher preparation to others considering the profession.

All three cohorts of middle level teachers were attentive to classroom management needs. Regardless of experience, they wanted additional emphasis on classroom management throughout their teacher preparation program. Explicitly, first and second-year teachers called for more classroom management strategies earlier and more often during teacher preparation programs. They also suggested mentoring for novice teachers who struggle with classroom management issues during the first years of their teaching career.

Middle level teachers in these field-based cohorts also exhibited a heightened awareness of university-school partnerships. Alongside university and school faculty, prospective teachers realized that field-based models are dependent on the teacher education institution-public school partnership. They believed that continuing dialogue and collaborative exchanges are critical for co-developing a model for the specialized preparation of middle level teachers.

Discussion

This study explored the perceptions of middle level teachers who had been prepared in a field-based model of an existent graduate teacher education program. Results are discussed in relation to the goals of the study.

The first goal of the study was to identify middle level teachers' attitudes toward their field-based preparation. In this study, the middle level teachers had predominantly positive perceptions of the field-based model. Preservice, first-year, and second-year teachers agreed that a field-based model helped them to become more effective and reflective teachers. They believed that extensive field experiences gave them multiple opportunities to learn from their own practice. To a large degree, middle level teachers in this study would recommend the field-based teacher education model to future teacher candidates.

This study's second goal was to discern the impact of a field-based education model on middle level teachers. Middle level teachers in this study were ready for the realities of the teaching profession and understood the complex nature of teaching. They had heightened awareness of the middle school culture as a result of their immersion in the schools. The cohort structure fostered positive relationships, which were apparent in their collegial exchanges within the cohort and in their interactions in the middle school.

Components that enhance middle level teachers' preparation in a field-based model include extensive field experience, school-based coursework, cohort structure, and collaborative partnerships. The results of this study build upon existing research. First, extensive fieldwork in field-based preparation models provides preservice teachers with more realistic views of teaching (Hayes, 2002), promotes the integration of coursework and fieldwork (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001), and potentially produces more effective teachers (Zeichner, 1980). Second, school-based coursework can help to connect coursework and field experiences (Darling-Hammond, 1999), draw upon the expertise of both school and university faculty members, and shift the focus of teacher education into the schools. Third, cohort structures can provide preservice teachers with positive academic support networks and help socialize them into the teaching profession (Arhar & Crowe, 2002; Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Bullough, Clark, & Wentworth, 2001; The Holmes Group, 1995). Fourth, field-based preparation models rely on collaborative partnerships, which merge the strengths of teacher education institutions and public schools (Caskey, 2000; Munby, 1999; Wiseman & Nason, 1995; Zeichner, 1980). Collaborative partnerships are imperative, because middle level practitioners and higher education faculty share the responsibilities and role of teacher educators (National Middle School Association, 1999).

Together, these components sustain a field-based model and warrant attention when developing or redesigning teacher education programs.

A factor that impedes middle level teachers' preparation in field-based model or other preparation approaches is the lack of appropriate middle level placements. Many middle level preservice teachers are placed in middle schools that are struggling to attain the essential middle level principles. Too few preservice teachers are positioned in middle schools that exemplify the recommendations of *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) or *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Middle level educators must face the challenge of supporting schools that embrace and sustain middle level philosophy in light of accountability pressures and scarce resources.

The final goal of this study is to develop a model for a specialized, middle level teacher education program. As aforementioned, extensive field experience, school-based coursework, cohort structure, and collaborative partnerships deserve consideration. This study suggests that field-based model components can be integrated into specialized preparation programs for middle level teachers. Unquestionably, middle level advocates support the need for specialized preservice programs for middle level teachers (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Dickinson & McEwin, 1997; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Manning, 1993; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995; McEwin, Dickinson, & Hamilton, 2000; National Middle School Association, 1999). Further, researchers assert that middle level teachers should be afforded extensive field experiences in middle schools (Butler, Davies, & Dickinson, 1991; Scales, & McEwin, 1994; Swaim & Stefanich, 1996). Researchers suggest cohorts in middle level teacher preparation programs (Arhar & Crowe, 2002). A field-based model of teacher education offers prospective middle level teachers intellectually challenging coursework and expansive fieldwork that will likely enrich their interactions with young adolescents.

Educational Importance

This study provides information to teacher educators who are considering or implementing a field-based model of teacher preparation for middle level teachers. Despite the limited sample size, the study supports the value of extensive field experience, cohort structure, and collaboration components. Further, it builds upon the foundation of existing research on field-based teacher education models. The study suggests that field-based cohorts ease the transition from preservice to practicing middle level teacher.

Finally, the study offers insights into how to provide specialized middle level preparation within the constraints of an existent teacher education program. A year-long field experience presented middle level teachers with authentic opportunities for planning and teaching lessons, evaluating and documenting student learning, managing classrooms, working with students of varied learning abilities, and communicating with students, teachers, parents, and their peers. Prospective middle level teachers learned about the distinct culture of middle schools as a result of their yearlong field experience. Extensive field experiences provided them with expanded opportunities to reflect upon their own performance as teachers and to make informed instructional decisions based upon their students' performance. Not only did the prospective middle level teachers write reflections after teaching a lesson, they also analyzed student-learning gains and wrote final reflections for the work samples. Consequently, prospective middle level teachers were confident in their ability to learn from experience and to meet the very real demands of teaching in a middle school.

APPENDIX A
FIELD-BASED TEACHER PREPARATION SURVEY ITEMS

Part I: Agreement Levels

5 levels: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree

1. I like the field-based teacher education approach employed by the university and school district.
2. The field-based teacher education approach helps me to examine my own assumptions as a teacher.
3. I think that extensive fieldwork affords me the time to become the kind of teacher that I want to be.
4. I am confident that I have the knowledge and competencies needed for a successful teaching career.
5. I believe that extensive field experiences help me to become a better teacher.
6. The field-based teacher education approach enables me to work with and learn from my colleagues.
7. Student and cooperating teacher relationships are fostered in the field-based education approach.
8. Learning to teach from experience is an advantage of the field-based teacher education approach.

9. The field-based teacher education approach helps me to reflect on my own teaching.
10. The field-based teacher education approach allows me to reach some of my own professional goals.
11. I feel a strong sense of community with members of my field-based teacher cohort.
12. The field-based approach permits me to contribute significantly to the public school's culture.
13. I can identify specifically my areas of strength as a teacher.
14. I can identify areas that I need to develop further as a teacher.
15. I would recommend the field-based teacher education approach to other students.

Part II: Open-ended questions

1. What were your expectations of a field-based teacher preparation approach?
2. What characteristics of the field-based teacher preparation approach would be the most important to retain for future cohorts?
3. What characteristics of the field-based program need to be modified?
4. What aspect of the field-based teacher preparation program was advantageous for your professional development as a teacher?
5. In consideration of all that was planned during your field-based experience, what do believe was most important?

APPENDIX B
INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What types of experiences in your field-based cohort were most beneficial?
2. How well do your believe you are or were prepared for the realities of public school teaching?
3. What does the field-based approach to teacher education do well?
4. What does the field-based approach to teacher education need to change or improve?
5. For what reasons would you recommend field-based teacher preparation to future preservice teachers?

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CHAPTER 4

APPROACHING AND AVOIDING THE MIDDLE

Teacher Preparation in New Zealand

C.J. Patrick Nolan, Ruth G. Kane, and Peter Lind
Massey University, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a picture of the current status of middle school education in New Zealand and the reality of the pre-service preparation of teachers to teach across the middle years (ages 11–15). The chapter builds a case for re-conceptualizing pre-service teacher education so teacher preparation for middle years teaching is comparable in status with other prevailing forms of teacher preparation and accorded parity of esteem with them. We propose a model of teacher education for middle years teaching that adapts elements critical to all teacher education and combines them with what is known about middle level education and the emerging requirements of middle level teacher education.

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INTRODUCTION

Efforts to implement middle level education philosophy and methodology in New Zealand schools have made considerable progress over the past decade. Both teachers and the community increasingly acknowledge that the educational needs and characteristics of young adolescents are distinctive, and that they require educational provisions and methods that are equally distinctive and that differ in many ways from those employed in elementary and secondary schools. Increasingly, teacher educators too are becoming aware that teachers who work with students in the middle require pre-service preparation and in-service professional development that take into account ways to effectively meet the needs of these students. In the main, however, New Zealand teacher education institutions prepare teachers to work and teach in schools either as elementary or secondary teachers. In this respect pre-service teacher preparation programs and the teacher education models that underpin them, and which also underpin in-service teacher development, are bi-partisan. They support rather than challenge bifurcation of the school system as essentially an elementary and secondary system.

In the New Zealand system, generic elementary and secondary teacher roles are reinforced and legitimated, as are the boundaries and professional teacher identities that delimit teaching as being exclusively either elementary or secondary. The effect to date is that teacher preparation programs do not address the needs of schools in terms of preparing middle level teachers to teach in them. Nor do they provide targeted professional development support for practicing middle school teachers. To put the point bluntly, a focus on the middle years of schooling in New Zealand teacher education remains *all but absent*, nationally, from pre-service teacher education and from in-service teacher professional development programs.

This absence is readily explained in terms of the prevalence of elementary and secondary school structures and the virtual exclusion of alternatives. It is a less than satisfactory explanation, however, given a developing awareness in the New Zealand community at large (Sutton, 2000) that existing forms of schooling and existing teacher preparation models are proving: (a) less than adequate to address the educational and developmental needs of students in the middle; and, (b) less than adequate to meet the needs of the teachers who are assigned, or who elect, to teach students in the middle years across the range of schools operating in New Zealand. Discussion later in the chapter identifies the types of schools attended by students as they progress through the middle years. The school system includes a significant number of Grades 7–8 intermediate schools ($n = 134$) which, by definition, are middle schools but tend to operate more like elementary schools, and just nine Grades 7–10 schools, all established during the 1990s, which operate by and large as middle schools in the North American sense.

In New Zealand, attendance at school is compulsory for all children from their sixth to their sixteenth birthdays, although most go to school at age five. Levels of schooling are described as Years of schooling, that is, Age 5 = Year 1 and Age 17 = Year 13. Years 7–10 (Grades 6–9 in the USA) are now identified as the middle years and students from age 11 to15, in them, are now commonly referred to as "emerging adolescents" in this country (Stewart & Nolan, 1992). Diagram 1 identifies the five types of schools in New Zealand. They include Years 1–8 elementary (Grades K–7) schools for 5–12 year-olds, which range from single teacher schools in geographically remote areas to urban schools with 20 or more teachers; Years 1–6 (Grades K–5) elementary schools located in urban areas; Years 7–8 (Grades 6–7) Intermediate schools for 11- to 12-year-old students only in urban areas and regional cities; Years 1–13 (Grades K–12) Composite schools in rural areas where only one school is justified to serve a community; Years 7–10 (Grades 6–9) Restricted Composite (middle) schools in urban areas and regional cities only; Years 7–13 (Grades 6–12) secondary schools for 11- to 18-year-olds in rural cities and towns; and Years 9–13 (Grades 8–12) secondary schools attended by 13–17 year olds, located in urban areas, regional cities and some larger towns.

Projects with some of the new middle schools (Years 7–10) and curriculum research and development efforts conducted over the past 15 or so years with Years 9 and 10 middle level students in secondary schools have demonstrated the capacity of teachers working in the schools to incorporate middle level philosophy and methodology into their practice. The research and development projects, in the secondary schools, carried out without explicit reference to middle level education experience and research, incorporated many of the elements espoused by North American proponents of middle level education philosophy and practice. Some of the key findings of the projects-in-action (Hawk & Hill, 1996, 2000; Nolan & McKinnon, 1998) included:

- Teachers with depth of knowledge in a range of discipline knowledge areas (subjects) knowing how to assist students to develop that knowledge and make linkages between forms of knowledge;
- Teachers working in teams to design and deliver interdisciplinary and integrative curriculum programs;
- Teachers systematically using active and interactive learning and teaching strategies combined with high levels of student participation and decision-making;

- Teachers utilizing learning experiences in the community outside the classroom and school so that students could experience real-life contexts for the development and application of educational knowledge and skills;
- Teachers forging links between school and communities/neighborhoods so that students might directly experience reciprocity between school and community and see how they can be and are interdependent;
- Schools using block scheduling so that students could experience continuity of learning involving team work on projects; and
- Schools using homeroom arrangements in which a group of specialist teachers work as a team (e.g., three teachers, say a math teacher, a science teacher and a third who teaches English and social studies), and students thereby experience continuity of relationships with each other and the same group of teachers and develop relationships of trust with them.

This list illustrates the middle level character of the pedagogy and curriculum design of these programs for Years 9 and 10 students within secondary schools. Through teamwork and collaboration in particular, the secondary teachers involved in the projects learned over time that they could work more effectively with young adolescents, and have a greater influence on their development if they first learned to work collaboratively with their peers across subject disciplines.

Such work required that the teachers share their knowledge with others in order to plan and teach interdisciplinary programs and assist students to devise projects of an interdisciplinary nature. Two aspects were vital to this process. Firstly, teachers worked and planned together in interdisciplinary teams and made their views and assumptions explicit. In the process, they discovered how to develop shared understandings of goals and the methods necessary for interdisciplinary programs and how to deal with differences of opinion. Secondly, teachers learned that when they subordinated their own interest in teaching "a subject" to developing a more general topic or a theme of interest to students, they had more knowledge and skills of an interdisciplinary and disciplinary nature than they had first realized. That is to say, the teachers possessed, activated, and made explicit tacit "teacher knowledge" to a greater degree than they or their peers had previously been aware.

This "teacher knowledge" took three forms:

- cognate disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge that they could teach and assist students to develop and possibly apply;
- procedural knowledge of how to create the conditions and an environment that would enable students to learn in ways that the teach-

ers had not hitherto given attention to, that is, new forms of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987); and, though to a lesser extent,

- knowledge of how students learn in the sense of seeking and getting to appreciate the knowledge that students already possess, how they acquired it, and how it could be harnessed as a foundation for new and further student-centered and student-directed learning.

These findings identify elements currently lacking in New Zealand teacher education institutions and thereby suggest the direction and form that middle level pre-service teacher preparation programs might take. Pre-service middle level teacher preparation programs envisaged for the future would build on pre-service student teachers' own knowledge of themselves as teachers, and make their emerging "teacher knowledge-in-action" the central focus of their teacher preparation programs. Teacher knowledge-in-action refers to the gestalt or the whole complex of accumulated general and situation-specific knowledge and expertise that neophyte and experienced teachers routinely draw upon and use in their practice.

Because, by and large, New Zealand teacher education reflects a view of teaching as either secondary or elementary (including early childhood), consideration needs to be given to pre-service programs adopting a focus also on preparing teachers for work in the middle years. Pre-service programs must help future middle level teachers acquire an identity as middle level teachers with specific skills and knowledge that address the needs of middle level learners. In the current New Zealand school system, it is unlikely that teachers would teach *only* students in the middle years. The absence of middle schools results in teachers being appointed to either elementary or secondary schools. Within these schools teachers may have a focus on middle level teaching but it is unlikely that they would be engaged exclusively at this level. The existing school structure and some recently proposed teacher education programs (discussed later in this chapter) in New Zealand are in marked contrast to what middle school advocates are trying to accomplish in the United States, that is, specialized preparation just for middle level teaching.

In addition to identifying the three aforementioned forms of teachers' knowledge the projects revealed that ethnic and cultural diversity was a distinguishing characteristic of the nine new middle schools mentioned above. By and large, the schools came into existence to meet the needs of diverse students and their communities. For their part, the communities saw the schools as providing the sense of continuity and coherence that their children needed across the middle years. In these nine school environments, school staff members appreciated the cultural and social values and beliefs of the communities and incorporated them into the culture of the schools and into the schools' educational programs (Neville-Tisdall, 2002).

The new middle schools and their communities typically fought and won political battles in order to establish schools for young adolescents. Likewise, attempts to introduce middle level education methodology into secondary schools have met resistance, primarily from schools' administrators and teachers wedded to tried and true secondary education methods and approaches. Typically, they view middle level education strategies as being educationally unjustified or see them as an implied criticism of them and their practice. The lesson in New Zealand for the proponents of middle level education is that teachers require an understanding of the cultural, social, and political aspects of teaching in the middle and that such an understanding should be developed within programs of pre-service middle level teacher preparation. Given contemporary reports of middle level education under siege (Beane, 1999) in the USA, such knowledge and expertise is critical to middle level teacher preparation programs generally.

Purpose

In this chapter we present a picture of the current status of middle school education in New Zealand and the reality of the pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers to teach across the middle years. We build a case for re-conceptualizing pre-service teacher education so that teacher preparation for middle years teaching is comparable in status with other prevailing forms of teacher preparation and accorded parity of esteem with them. To this end, we propose a model of teacher education for middle years teaching that adapts elements (precepts, principles, and perspectives) critical to all teacher education and combines them with what is known about middle level education and the emerging requirements of middle level teacher education for New Zealand. While presented as a model of teacher preparation for teaching across the middle years, the model may have potential for application elsewhere in other teacher education systems outside New Zealand. As we see it, the main challenge for New Zealand in the foreseeable future is to ensure that pre-service and in-service teachers are introduced to middle level methods and approaches which they can utilize even in school settings and structures that are less well suited to middle level education than are many middle schools in the United States (Nolan & Brown, 2002).

The overall theme of the chapter is making conscious the unconscious culture of school education and teacher education (Saul, 1995) in two ways. Firstly, the essential argument is that continued acceptance of the elementary-secondary dichotomy, and the ideology that embeds it, entails exclusion of the middle, yet such exclusion is not justified. Secondly, the challenge to the teaching service and teacher educators is to see how a middle level education perspective and methodology might sit comfortably or be integrated with the elementary and secondary perspectives and provisions that predominate at present. To this end, we assert that educational practitioners and teacher educators may no longer take refuge in the prevailing elementary-secondary ideology which to date has remained unchallenged.

To achieve its purpose, the chapter is organized into four sections:

- Description and examination of the New Zealand school system, which provides clarification of the context and conditions within which students in the middle are educated and which will require reform in order to support the introduction of middle level teacher preparation initiatives;
- Description and discussion of New Zealand institutions of teacher education, which clarifies the scope of what exists currently and signals the potential for the introduction of additional, alternative ways of constructing teacher education programs;
- Explanation of a proposed Model of Teacher Preparation that seeks to take into account current research into the theory and practice of both teacher education and teaching in middle years classrooms; and
- Discussion of the potential implications of introducing such a model which reflect on the prospects for change and the conditions and circumstances that may support or impede new ways of understanding teacher preparation for middle school teachers within New Zealand.

SCHOOLS IN NEW ZEALAND: WHERE ARE THE MIDDLE YEARS?

During the 1990s, the establishment of nine Grades 7–10 middle schools in New Zealand for students aged from 11 to 15 years, very similar to the North American middle school concept, heralded a new direction for New Zealand school education. Prior to this, the Grades 7–8 Intermediate School had been in existence since the early 1950s as a truncated form of middle school (Watson, 1964). Today, approximately 50% of all students in Grades 7–8 attend one of 134 intermediate schools. The intermediate schools assist 11- to 13-year-old students to make the transition from elementary to secondary school. As New Zealand's most long-standing schools in the middle, the intermediates operate as "senior" elementary schools, however, not middle schools. In contrast, the new middle schools of the

1990s, and others currently being established, support middle level education per se. They actively endorse, although they do not uncritically accept, the charter of the National Middle School Association (NMSA, 2001). In so doing they actively and purposefully embody in their practice middle level education philosophy, precepts, and principles, developed and tested by North American middle level practitioners and researchers over more than fifty years.

In this respect, these recently emerging middle schools stand in contrast with virtually all other schools in New Zealand, which are either elementary or secondary schools or composites of such schools. Teaching in these other schools is in accordance with enduring models of elementary or secondary school education. Although elementary and secondary schools both have undergone curriculum reform in recent years, the general form of education they provide has remained essentially the same.

The elementary schools remain fundamentally expressive and nurturing, focused on the development of children's attitudes, knowledge, and skills. In some important respects, for example, the teaching of reading and the use of holistic-intuitive teaching methods, New Zealand elementary schools are renowned internationally. As demonstrated by North American research (McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 1995; Raebeck, 1998); however, elementary schools are not places educationally well suited for emerging adolescents.

The secondary schools offer a largely discipline-based, compartmentalized and academic curriculum and, in the main, secondary teachers employ mainly didactic forms of pedagogy. The intermediate schools generally are thought to be different from the elementary and secondary schools. It remains moot, as indicated above, however, as to whether they cater to the needs of those who attend them (nearly 59,000 students across Years 7–8) any better than do the other types of New Zealand schools which emerging adolescents attend.

New Zealand School Types and Distribution of Students in Grades 7–10

The five types of schools in New Zealand (see Table 4.1), and their distribution throughout the country reflect both the population distribution and geography. They have been created and taken their distinctive form over about 150 years in response to the requirements and the effects of both. The total number of schools (*n* = 2667) serves a population of just four million people, distributed across North and South Island of New Zealand between five major urban cities, 12 regional cities, and numerous rural towns and communities (something akin to a small- to medium-size state in the USA). Approximately two thirds of the population live in the North Island. All of New Zealand is mountainous, although more so in South than North Island which impacts on the geographical distribution of the population and associated schools. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of Years 7–10 students across New Zealand school types.

Table 4.1. Numbers and Percentages of Students in Years 7–8 and Years 9–10 Attending Each Type of School in the New Zealand School System (July 2001)

School Type	*Number of Schools*	*Years 7 & 8 students*		*Years 9 & 10 students*	
		N	*%*	*N*	*%*
Elementary Schools					
Years 1–6	852	5,000	5	NA	NA
Years 1–8	1,229	43,700	34	NA	NA
Intermediate Schools					
Years 7–8	134	59,000	46	NA	NA
Composite Schools					
Years 1–13	110	4,200	3	7,400	5
Restricted Composite Schools					
Years 7–10 (Middle Schools)	7	1,900	1	2,000	1
Secondary Schools					
Years 7–13	92	13,500	11	18,500	13
Years 9–13	243	NA	NA	116,000	81
Total	2,667	127,300	100	143,900	100

Source: New Zealand Ministry of Education website (2001)

The prevalence of small communities in New Zealand and their relative isolation means that intermediate schools are unlikely to increase in number or expand to become three or four-year Grades span middle schools, although an expanding population in some areas of North Island (especially in the main urban areas) may create conditions for the formation of more Grades 7–10 middle schools. Some Grades 7–13 secondary schools are planning to reorganize their current schools into middle schools alongside senior high schools. Overall, however, the majority of students as they move into and out of the broad age-span of the middle years (students 11 to 15 years of age moving through Grades 7–10) will continue being educated in a combination of elementary and secondary schools or composite schools.

Given this scenario, if the elementary and secondary schools are to effectively address the needs of their students in the middle, then the lesson from middle level experience and research (Nolan & McKinnon, 1991, 1998) is clear. Both types of school should be more distinctly an appropriate educational place for students in the middle, although for reasons outlined elsewhere the achievement of this outcome is likely to be much harder for elementary than it is for secondary schools (Nolan & Brown, 2002).

TEACHER EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND: AVOIDING AND APPROACHING THE MIDDLE

By and large, all the New Zealand teachers whom students in the middle encounter would have been initially prepared for the teaching service either in an elementary or a secondary pre-service teacher education program. Until the early 1990s, such preparation was provided by one of six specialist colleges of education, each of which had well established relationships with local schools and offered substantial professional development to teachers within their region (Alcorn, 1999). The traditional culture of the colleges required that staff, recruited almost exclusively from primary and secondary schools, show allegiance to and actively support government policy on teacher education, both in their practice and their views (Openshaw, 1999). At this time no evidence existed of government policy acknowledging middle level schooling as a distinct stage. Pre-1990, the colleges of education offered three-year diploma programs for elementary teachers, and one-year professional diploma programs for secondary teachers, who already held bachelors degrees in subjects typically taught in schools. Most of these six specialist colleges had links with local universities and through these links pre-service student teachers could complete degree level studies across a range of disciplines, either prior to, or in conjunction with, their professional teacher preparation.

Reform of the education system introduced in 1988 (Department of Education, 1988) encompassed all levels of education from early childhood to tertiary (Alcorn, 1999) and opened the way for the establishment of alternative teacher education institutions. As a result, the colleges of education and universities lost their monopoly position as new institutions were established and new and alternative teacher education programs proliferated. The New Zealand pre-service teacher education sector as a consequence is now internationally atypical in that it includes universities, colleges of education, Maori tertiary education institutions (called wananga in Maori), polytechnics, and private tertiary enterprises. In 2003, 17 institutions offer a diversity of degree-level teacher education qualifications and a number of others offer diploma programs not at degree level, the latter predominantly in the area of early childhood education. Teacher education is thus competitive in a way that it was not prior to the reforms of 1988 and teacher education institutions are pressed to develop ever more "efficient" models of teacher education.

All through the changes, pre-service teacher preparation continued to be preparation for either elementary or secondary teaching, with early childhood as a specialty added in the last decade, but with no provision made for middle years teaching. While a wider range of teacher education institutions now exist, two models of pre-service elementary and secondary teacher preparation continue to dominate.

Preparation for elementary teaching (and early childhood) predominantly takes the form of a three-year undergraduate degree that comprises some variation of the following four components:

- Contextual studies which examine the theoretical and research basis of learning and teaching through the study of sociology, philosophy, history, and comparative education including exploration of the purposes and priorities of education;
- Professional practice in which students have the opportunity to examine theoretical concepts, skills, and attitudes essential to developing as a teacher in a range of classroom contexts and locations;
- Curriculum Studies which examine the philosophy, content, and pedagogy that inform the New Zealand Curriculum, notably its seven essential learning areas comprising the educational content knowledge of the national curriculum;
- Subject Studies which require that students develop specific disciplinary knowledge and skills across curriculum areas and, in some cases, allow opportunities for subject specialization.

Preparation for secondary teaching within New Zealand continues to be dominated by the one-year post-degree diploma qualification. Students first complete an undergraduate degree in a major area of discipline knowledge, usually with an accompanying minor. The major later defines one's professional identity as a teacher in the secondary service. The one-year diploma introduces graduates to the curriculum, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and capabilities required for secondary teaching across two curriculum areas.

Within the framework of these two models (or approaches), some intensive pre-service programs of shorter duration have been developed over the past five years primarily in response to a teacher supply crisis, but again middle level teacher preparation is not one of them. Regardless of duration, level (elementary or secondary), or special focus (bilingual), the existing New Zealand teacher preparation programs conform with trends internationally in terms of their compartmentalized rather than holistic designs (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Levin, 1995); overly heavy focus on the curriculum (Shulman, 1987); perpetuation of the dichotomy between theory and practice (Ethell, 1997b); and tendency to be dismissive rather than accommodating of the voices of student teachers (Korthagen, 2001; Russell, 2001).

THE CHALLENGE: PREPARING TEACHERS TO TEACH STUDENTS IN THE MIDDLE

The model of teacher preparation for middle-level education outlined here stands in contrast with contemporary trends and models in elementary and secondary teacher education, and perhaps middle-level teacher preparation too! The underlying assumption of the Model is that, irrespective of the level of schooling for which a teacher is being prepared, the primary determinants of a coherent and effective teacher preparation program lie in the development of a coherent conceptual framework; the adoption of central themes or ethics that link all the components of the program and vest it with coherence; and educative and professional practice experiences that enable pre-service students to develop their own personal knowledge-in-action as beginning teachers (Adapted from Howey, 1996; Ethell, 1997). Such a conception is consistent with general middle level education philosophy which, following Dewey (1938), proposes that education in the middle years is essentially developmental and integrative and it necessitates a broadly constructivist methodology. Teacher education for the middle years has (or should have) the same character and accordingly its main assumption, embedded in the Model we propose, is that middle-level teacher preparation is a process more of *becoming a teacher* than *learning to teach at the middle level* through acquisition of middle level professional knowledge and skills. By incorporating the process approach (developmental, integrative, and constructivist), the Model respects student teachers' prior knowledge and experience (the ethical aspect) and views them as agents actively constructing (and deconstructing) and thereby developing themselves as teachers (the knowledge-in-action aspect).

In the model represented in Figure 4.1, the double-headed arrows signify interdependent and mutually supportive relationships between the elements of the Model. Student teachers' knowledge-in-action and knowledge of self as teacher are located at the centre as the mediating focus through which student teachers engage actively in the process of becoming a teacher. The four elements of the model, analytically distinct but connected systemically to the center, are interdependent in the reality of teaching practice and becoming a teacher in a practical sense. In an actual

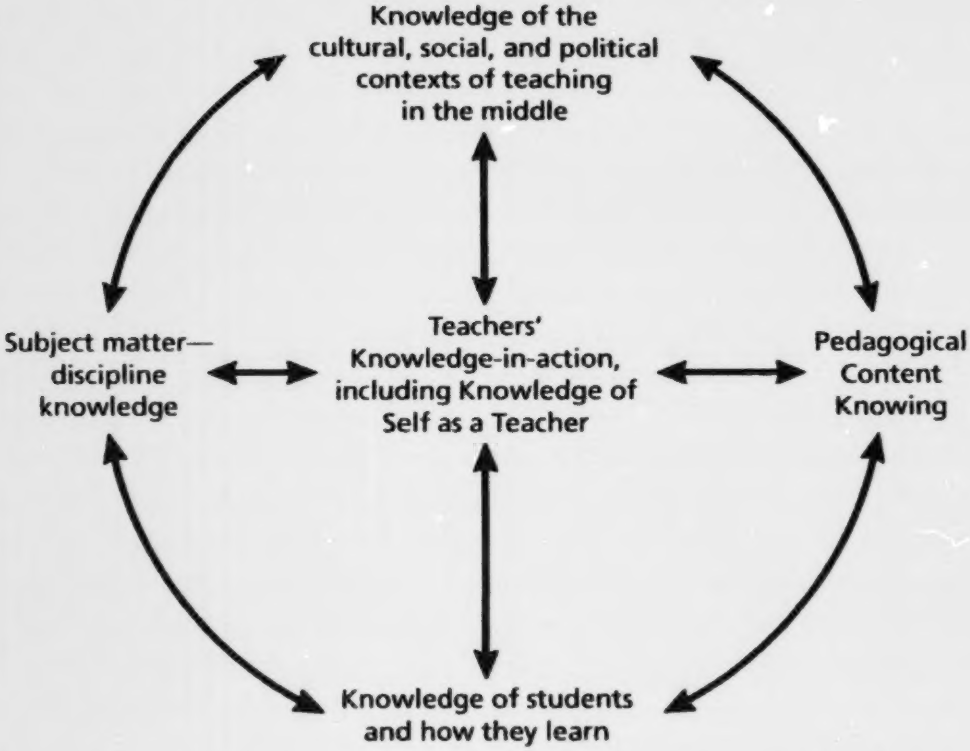
Knowledge of the cultural, social, and political contexts of teaching in the middle
Subject matter—discipline knowledge
Teachers' Knowledge-in-action, including Knowledge of Self as a Teacher
Pedagogical Content Knowing
Knowledge of students and how they learn

Figure 4.1. Model of Teacher Preparation for Middle-level Education

middle-level teacher preparation program based on the Model, the practicum is key: Through the practicum middle level teachers' knowledge-in-action develops through cycles of purposeful situated learning—observing and assessing the situation, planning to practice, practice itself, and reflecting on practice, with reflection informed by literature from middle level education and teacher education research.

Any given teacher preparation program design would treat the elements of the model as program objectives that are systemically linked. While a specific program design may require that a given unit of study in the program emphasize the objectives of one particular element (e.g., pedagogical content knowledge) for a particular purpose, the bigger picture of the whole model and connection between the elements remains as the principle organizing emphasis or theme.

THE MODEL IN ACTION

The location of teachers' knowledge-in-action and knowledge of self as teacher at the centre of the model permits middle level teacher preparation to be viewed as a nexus bringing together separate elements to form a holistic/systemic conception of the middle level teacher.

Knowledge of the cultural, social, and political context (especially important in terms of the multiculturalism of New Zealand) permits, requires even, that middle level teachers will be socially, culturally, and politically sensitive and aware teachers. Their development of subject matter discipline knowledge which, one way or another, forms the content of the middle level curriculum must be viewed from a diversity of perspectives. Specifically, the development of sensitivity and awareness lies in continuous examination by beginning teachers of their perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about knowledge, about the forms of knowledge, and about what counts as legitimate expressions of that knowledge. What constitutes knowledge may be viewed from many perspectives, but minimally attention must be given to the two perspectives of Maori (the indigenous people) and Pakeha (non-Maori) representing the two principal cultural groups of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) similarly involves student teachers' understanding that the way they represent knowledge to students is vital to engaging and sustaining middle level students' interest in learning. Because it is more inclusive than the original Shulman (1987) conception, we adopted Cochrane, de Ruiter, and King's (1993) version of pedagogical content knowing, with its multi-faceted meaning, for the Model. They define pedagogical content knowing as "teacher's integrated understanding of four components of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning" (p. 4). Re-focusing the original concept (Shulman, 1987) ensures that acknowledgment can be made of the essentially integrated nature of teaching, the challenges of becoming a teacher in the middle, and the complexity of the task.

Moreover, pedagogical content knowing, thus defined, has two aspects and makes two requirements of teachers. Firstly, teachers are better able to see that students in the middle develop and learn best when students' development of knowledge can be and is integrated with their experience, their emerging views of themselves, and with interests, issues, and concerns of a personal and social nature, real to them and real in the context of their homes, communities, and the larger (world) community. Second, teachers are sensitized to know that the representation of knowledge to and by students via the middle level curriculum (which students may help to design) is viewed differently depending on the perspective of the viewer, which may be a cultural, social, and/or personal perspective possibly different from the teacher's perspective.

The location of *knowledge of self as (middle level) teacher* at the centre of the model, and the associated systematic examination and development of this knowledge in relation to the other four elements, acknowledges the critical role played by beliefs, values, and personal conceptions in determining teaching practice. Research has demonstrated that student teachers bring beliefs and preconceptions of teaching and teachers to their preservice studies and that these are typically robust and resistant to change (Ethell & McMeniman, 2002; Richards & Killen, 1994; Tillema 1995). Locating knowledge of self as teacher at the centre of this model requires student teachers to make meaning from continually interrogating each new experience within a framework of their own beliefs and understandings, including those that they bring with them about teaching, schools, and learning from their own experiences as learners. By making this process explicit, the teacher educators reinforce the need for the student teachers to understand how the students whom they teach construct and use their understandings.

With respect to subject matter and discipline knowledge we note that, no less than teaching at any other level, middle level teachers require knowledge and understanding of the underlying nature of subject matter, i.e. core disciplinary and interdisciplinary concepts, structures, and tools of inquiry. It is possible that these may be developed best through study, say, at the master rate rather than at the bachelors level, thereby enabling pre-service teachers to accomplish in-depth understanding, as opposed to "thin understanding" that commonly forms the subject matter foundation of teachers' work. Valli (2000) argues that subject matter knowledge commonly is the key to developing knowledgeable, dynamic middle level teachers with transformed dispositions and the pedagogical skills both to challenge students intellectually and engage and sustain their interest in learning.

An apparent paradox with respect to subject matter and discipline knowledge is that the holistic-systemic (integration) principle of the middle level teacher preparation model-in-action requires that middle level student teachers learn to subordinate the explicit pursuit of subject matter knowledge objectives to student inquiry learning and learning based on themes that the students create (Nolan & McKinnon, 1991; Beane, 1997). In this way knowledge itself becomes integrated in the minds of learners though inquiry and application (Beane, 1997; Nolan & McKinnon, 1998). Sufficient examples of curricula programs thus designed now are available, even if they are not abundant, in New Zealand schools to illustrate to middle level pre-service teachers: (a) how holistic-systemic program designs that give primacy to interests, issues, and concerns real to the students work in practice; and (b) how such programs-in-action call forth both the application and the development of subject-matter, disciplinary knowledge (Nolan & McKinnon, 1998).

SUMMARY

Overall, the Model gives primacy to teacher knowledge-in-action and knowledge of self as teacher. It requires that pre-service teachers' own beliefs, attitudes, and views of what teaching means to them personally, and involves, be taken as the initial focus of teacher development and that teacher development be conducted within a supportive and collegial context. A simultaneous commitment is required that all elements of the model be integrated and that the notion of interests, issues, and concerns real to student teachers be employed as pivotal in the construction of a teacher preparation program. In this way, teacher preparation would match closely strategies of effective teaching in the middle years that similarly are personally and socially integrative. Experience from the projects mentioned at the outset (Nolan & McKinnon, 1998) shows that with middle level students (and we suggest with middle level student teachers) learning effectively involves working with others as well as on one's own. Working in this way develops commitment to others and collegiality, and the pedagogy and curriculum are grounded in authentic interests, concerns, and experiences of the individuals who are thereby engaged and motivated to learn.

Norms of cooperation, team work, and mutual support characteristic of holistic-integrative approaches are in counterpoint to the norms of teacher autonomy and independence that currently prevail and which, by and large, impede the uptake and adoption of middle level education and philosophy and practice in schools and in colleges of teacher education. The Model as presented invokes the general principle of integration in at least three of the ways identified by Beane (1997). Firstly, the focus is on the student teachers' development of perceptual knowledge through theorizing authentic experiences of practice (Ethell, 1997; Korthagen, 2001). Secondly, in so far as the pre-service middle level curriculum is organized around issues of personal and social concerns, identified by the student teachers, learning to teach is socially integrated and situated. Thirdly, integration as curriculum design requires an interrelationship between the knowing of the teacher (teacher educator) and of the student (student teacher). The development of teachers' personal knowledge-in-action through purposeful integration of the elements of contextual knowledge, knowledge of students, and subject knowledge emerges as pre-service teachers seek and are encouraged to address, understand, and negotiate the substantial disciplinary, professional, and technical knowledge and capabilities they wish to develop as they grow and develop continuously as middle level teachers.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The Model we propose for middle level teacher preparation in many ways does not, on the surface, look different from contemporary models of teacher education based on the notions of teacher knowledge and developing teacher-knowledge-in-action. This is one limitation of presenting a complex living process in the form of a two-dimensional diagram. The significant aspect or contribution of the Model, which makes it distinctive, is the way in which the elements of the model are integrated in effective teacher education practice. This integration might best be achieved through a commitment to viewing teacher education not as teaching student teachers how to teach, but rather as an opportunity to create experiences through which student teachers can become teachers.

As indicated earlier in the chapter, the New Zealand education community is only now exploring middle level education as a future direction and focus for school education. To date, no teacher-education programs exist that specifically address middle level teacher preparation. In the current educational climate of concern about the quality of the education that students in the middle receive, however, the tide may be turning and opportunities may be found to explore new ways of preparing teachers to work with and teach students as they develop and progress through the middle years.

To date neither Government nor any of the bodies responsible for teacher education in New Zealand has proposed that teacher education institutions develop and implement middle level teacher preparation courses and programs. The Ministry of Education requirement that institutions of teacher education, like the schools, be responsive to community interests and characteristics, however, may help the proponents of middle level teacher preparation to get a "toe in the door" and instigate change and development.

Curiously, such change and development may come from top down as much as from the grass roots, in a somewhat circular fashion. The results of a number of five-year Ministry of Education-funded school development projects are now showing that experimentations with middle level methodology and middle school structures in "at risk areas" are having positive effects on the motivation and achievements and retention at school of middle-level students, and on the communities in which the schools are located (Hawk & Hill, 1996, 2000).

As a probable next step, the Ministry may propose that teacher education institutions produce middle level trained teachers for schools in areas of rapid urban population growth where the need for middle level educated teachers is set to increase. Other developments of comparable significance (e.g., the 2003 Educational Review Office Report on school education in Grades 9 and 10 and lobbying by the New Zealand Intermediate and Middle Schools Principals' Association) will add to the pressure for changes in teacher education.

Two recently developed New Zealand pre-service programs have adopted a generic or seamless approach to teacher education, rather than focus on the specific needs of teachers preparing to teach "students in the middle." The thinking behind the programs appears to reflect the seamless curriculum orientation of the New Zealand national Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993) based on a notion of the continuity of child development rather than discontinuity of development that characterizes emerging and young adolescents.

Continuity and coherency (Levin, 1990) are vital internally in the design of middle level teacher preparation, along with a broader perspective than the somewhat narrow teacher preparation curriculum foci of the past (Shulman, 1987). A key goal of such programs, however, is to develop in the mind-set of teachers an understanding that middle level education is itself vital because discontinuity, not continuity, is a defining characteristic of adolescent development and education.

Commonly, the perspective on teaching that student teachers develop is more influenced by practicing associate teachers (often wedded to extant models of practice) with whom they are affiliated during practicum, than their lecturers whom they frequently perceive to be too "theoretical" and out of touch with the realities of "being a teacher." The integration of theory and practice through opportunities to theorize situations of authentic experience (Ethell, 1997) thus is particularly important for middle level teacher preparation in order that the hegemony of existing elementary and secondary models perpetuated by schools and teacher educators, and widely prevalent in the community, may eventually be overcome.

To this end the NMSA (2001) framework of program standards for middle-level teacher preparation outlines comprehensively the topics, ideas, and knowledge, comprising eight domains that reasonably should be included in any given middle level teacher preparation program. The domains include young adolescent development; middle level philosophy and school organization; middle level curriculum; middle level teaching fields; middle level instruction; middle level assessment; family and community involvement; and middle level professional roles. The contents of the domains, reflecting the findings of experience and research on middle level education from over half a century, suggest specific ways that middle level teaching and middle level teacher preparation are distinctive and fit the "no-half measures" design model for middle level education of the future outlined by Jackson and Davis (2000).

The NMSA standards are thus more than just taxonomy. They provide explicit guidelines with which to decide the content and the structure of a whole middle level teacher preparation program based upon the Model presented in this chapter. From the perspective of emerging middle level education in New Zealand, the NMSA standards may contribute positively toward construction of the framework for middle level teacher preparation in New Zealand, and this at a time when school education across the middle years is increasingly under the microscope as the area of New Zealand school education most in need of urgent development and reform.

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CHAPTER 5

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE MIDDLE LEVEL SCHOOL

Tangled Threads

Thomas S. Dickinson
DePauw University

Deborah A. Butler and W. Michele Pittard
Wabash College

ABSTRACT

Professional development at the middle school level has a convoluted history, particularly with regard to middle level teacher preparation. This chapter discusses this history from three perspectives: the recent history of professional development for middle level schools and their teachers; policies and trends affecting middle school teacher professional development including current concerns about accountability, the renewed focus on subject matter expertise, and middle school teacher preparation standards; and support for new and experienced middle school teachers through profes-

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sional development including mentoring, induction, action research, looking at student work, and professional development as part of the every day lives of teachers and teams.

INTRODUCTION

A major component of the history of the middle level school[1] has been the saga of an uphill struggle for teacher preparation, appropriate college and university course offerings, and the citadel, distinctive licensure, for middle level teachers. So too has been the drive to create professionally appropriate in-service educational opportunities for teachers of young adolescents. In fact, professional development and teacher preparation were often one and the same throughout much of the history of the middle level school. In other words, when colleges and universities did not provide appropriate middle level teacher preparation for pre-service educators, then professional development for practicing middle level teachers was all that was available.

For the history of the junior high school, the focus of professional development was "whole school." This pattern is understandable when viewed within the context of establishing a "new school" and its characteristic curriculum and organization. Part of the reason, however, for focusing on the "whole school" for professional development was the almost complete lack of involvement by higher education in the preparation of junior high school teachers—whether that preparation focused on the overall preparation of teachers for this new school or on specific elements or functions of the school (Bossing & Cramer, 1965; Briggs, 1920; Gruhn & Douglass, 1947; Howard & Stoumbis, 1970; Koos, 1955; McFarland, 1953; Noar, 1961; Smith, Standley & Hughes, 1942). One can only imagine what might have been different at the school level if junior high teacher education programs had been created. One possible scenario would be the recruitment of teachers educated for this level of schooling; the application of the then-governing functions of the junior high school; and the creation, development, and refinement of programs and instruction grounded on this base of educated teachers (Gruhn & Douglass, 1947). In other words, imagine if you will, the absence of a need for a middle school movement.

However, there was no lack of guidance on school improvement plans for the junior high school. In *The Junior High School Program* (1958), the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools outlined a proposal for the professional growth of the junior high school staff, again citing the non-involvement of higher education:

> Because the preparation of teachers, principals and other professional personnel needed to staff our junior high schools has been neglected by most teacher education institutions, development of skills needed at this level must for the present take place in large measure through in-service education. . . . Only through a "whole school" approach can a good junior high school curriculum, improved teaching and effective articulation with the high school and elementary school be achieved. (p. 99)

But the in-service programs, and their hoped-for impact, never came. The junior high school floundered as a school organization that provided neither appropriate curricular study nor a stable environment for student development. Yet the calls for sustained in-service continued right to the end of the junior high school movement. Van Til, Vars, and Lounsbury, writing in the last great text of the junior high school era (1961), observed, "As greater attention is given to the junior high school years during the 1960s, improved teacher preparation and certification may be expected. In the meantime, continuous in-service education is needed to help all junior high school teachers" (p. 505).

With the dawning of the middle school movement in the early 1960s, the trend of "whole school" professional development continued. As school after school transitioned from junior high school to middle school, whole school in-service education was the dominant mode of transition simply because no one was truly prepared to teach in this newly created school environment. As well, as the movement progressed beyond transition, the non-engagement of colleges and universities with the middle level school resurfaced again.

The following discussion will examine professional development at the middle level from three perspectives:

- the recent history of professional development for middle level schools and their teachers;
- policies and trends affecting middle school teacher professional development including current concerns about accountability; the renewed focus on subject matter expertise; and middle school teacher preparation standards, particularly on the graduate level; and
- support for new and experienced middle school teachers through professional development including mentoring, induction, action research, looking at student work, and professional development as part of the every day life of teachers and teams.

REVVING THINGS UP: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

There has been, over the history of the middle school, a slow rise in specialized middle grades preparation programs (McEwin, Dickinson, & Swaim, 1996). The rise is encouraging. In part, too, the visibility of specialized preparation and licensure for middle grades teachers was enhanced by the development of the Early Adolescence Generalist Standards in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 1991) for the in-service educator. The development of voluntary national certification encouraged new ways of thinking about individual professional development for a middle grades teacher as well as staff development focused at the school level.

By the middle and late 1980s, several important reports appeared which pushed education rapidly toward the development of standards for teaching and learning and more high-stakes assessments for both teachers and their students. Appearing in 1983 from the Reagan administration's education department, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) sounded a call for increased attention to student performance and higher standards for teachers who teach in our schools. Following this, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), a program of Carnegie Corporation of New York, called for reforms that touched on teacher preparation in general and proposed, in one of its recommendations, a national certification process for highly prepared and exemplary teachers already in the field, a recommendation which developed into the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (p. 55).

The *National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Redesign Standards* completed in the 1980s encouraged teacher educators in general to rethink the standards by which teacher education units were accredited. As part of this redesign effort, the wide variety of content-oriented professional education associations redesigned their own standards for teachers. It was at this point, in the late 1980s, that the National Middle School Association appointed its own group to develop national middle school teacher preparation standards. The result was not only the standards for preparing middle grades teachers for their initial licenses, but also standards for in-service teachers' Masters and Doctorates with an emphasis on middle grades education. (The most recent teacher preparation standards from National Middle School Association were revised in 2001.)

While graduate education has become only one form of continued professional development, at this point, in the late 1980s, this continued coursework and degree work were still considered to be a primary route for not only re-licensure but for professional development. However, parallel to these national reports of the 1980s and early 1990s, a whole burgeoning literature developed on institutional reform and the change process itself. Based on work by theorists and thinkers such as Fritz (1989), Senge (1990), Fullan (1991), and Sarason (1991), educators would soon begin to think about how to go beyond a fragmented approach to professional development and move toward a paradigm of on-going, life-long professional development.

While standards development and professional development movements were re-shaping the landscape for continued professional development, the National Middle School Association's NCATE-approved standards for initial and continuing preparation were being devised as well. In the broad policy environment of the 1980s, advocates for middle grades teacher preparation and teacher development were not silent as several background documents were critical in developing policy for this level (Arth & Weiss, 1977; George & McEwin, 1978; Putbrese, 1984). The National Middle School Association (NMSA) itself had already sponsored the publication, *This We Believe* (1982), which called for special knowledge and skills on the part of teachers of young adolescents (pp. 18–19). This call went out again in the revised version of *This We Believe* (1992, pp. 26, 30). To highlight the importance of preparation and continued development of middle level teachers, NMSA also prepared *Professional Certification and Preparation for the Middle Level: A Position Paper of the National Middle School Association* (1986; reprinted 1991) which specifically outlined the personal qualities, teacher competencies, pre-service preparation, and in-service education needed for quality teaching in the middle grades (pp. 10–12).

The impact of these publications was significant, but perhaps the most nationally visible document affecting the increasing attention on middle level teacher preparation and professional development was Carnegie Corporation's *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). While not very specific on the kind of continuing education and professional development needed to sustain the education of a middle level educator, *Turning Points* did call for "evaluat(ing) the nature and character of staff development for experienced teachers" (p. 83). More importantly, *Turning Points* (1989) did contain a critical issues section aimed at state task forces on middle grades education, which ended up serving as a blueprint for states to follow as they re-examined and reformed middle level education. In other words, while states' reforms captured the notion of separate initial preparation, these reform agendas also created an agenda for teaching the middle grades concept as the focus of staff development.

Carnegie's efforts were meant to lead to holistic middle grades reform, and Carnegie supported that reform with rounds of state funding in the early 1990s under its Middle Grade School State Policy Initiative. State departments of education were not slow in responding, and a number of states applied for and received funding to engage in deep reform that would re-energize and redirect both preparation and staff development guidelines. California, with its *Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools* (1987), had already provided a state-level call for middle grades reform; Carnegie funding now made it possible for many more states to follow suit (e.g., Connecticut State Department of Education and Health Services and Human Resources, 1991; Kentucky Education Agency, 1991; Texas Education Agency, 1991).

These types of state policy guidelines, at first national and now state level, fueled more policy dialogues such as *Middle Grades Education in an Era of Reform* (Academy for Educational Development, Inc., 1993). This document was the result of the combined efforts of organizations like the Center for Early Adolescence, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, NCATE, NMSA, and the National Staff Development Council among many others, all of whom were concerned that even the newest middle grades initiatives did not address comprehensive systemic change in policy affecting middle level education. The emerging vision for systemic reform included a high priority on professional preparation and professional development of in-service teachers and those who needed to be retrained for teaching in a middle level school.

Clearly, given the nature of the conceptual components of the middle school itself, in-service teachers, most of whom had been prepared in either an elementary or secondary model, would need quite a bit of re-education to fulfill the needs of the young adolescent student. It is interesting to note that, in hindsight, the authors of *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) recognize that the original *Turning Points* document did not go far enough in 1989 in grounding its reform recommendations in continuous professional development for the middle level teacher (p. 110). Frankly, however, at the time of the original report's publication in 1989, the re-visioning of staff development in the late 1980s and early 1990s was still taking shape, eventually coalescing around systems thinking, a belief in constructivist learning, and results-based learning (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). It was in the mid-1990s that educators interested in the move toward an on-going professional development paradigm (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995) built on this literature, and began to call for the fundamental rethinking of professional development. In this new paradigm, professional development is seen as an on-going, goal directed (for the individual and the school or school district), student learner-focused endeavor which occurs in the context of significant learning activity carried out in an environment promoting the adult learner's needs. Policy documents such as the

National Staff Development Council's standards for professional development at all levels, including the middle level (1994), began to further influence states and school districts, and documents like the National Governors' Association's *Transforming Professional Development for Teachers: A Guide for State Policymakers* (Corcoran, 1995) found ready audiences for this shift in thinking about professional development.

The move toward standards and higher accountability began to dominate the education scene in the 1990s even for the middle grades. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the visibility of specialized preparation, licensure, and professional development for middle grades teachers was enhanced by both the development of the Early Adolescence Generalist Standards by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 1991), and by new ways of thinking about professional development for middle grades teachers. The NBPTS Early Adolescence Generalist Standards (EAGS) developed out of the National Board's main policy framework document, *Toward High and Rigorous Standards for the Teaching Profession*, which appeared in several editions (1991). More importantly, the National Board's intention was to use this framework to guide the development of the teaching standards and assessments, which were to be performance-based. In an era when calls for reform of American education, including America's middle schools, were plentiful, this attention to standards that were performance-based heralded the new and upcoming focus on standards, assessment, and performance.

RECENT TRENDS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON MIDDLE GRADES POLICY

The focus on standards and recommendations for preparation and professional development throughout the 1990s filtered into subject areas and into other reform efforts in education—technology, multicultural education, and special needs students—especially as these related to the in-service teacher (Hadderman, 2000; Thornton, 2001). Routinely, subject area professional organizations (e.g., National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) described standards for the preparation of teachers at different levels that included the middle level. However, by the 1990s and early 2000s, the call for more accountability changed the nature of how standards were written. As we neared and entered the 21st century, more performance assessment of teachers (following the earlier cues of the NBPTS/EAGS) dominated the writing of policy documents guiding the profession.

As a primary example of this, the National Middle School Association's new teacher preparation standards were rewritten in performance-based language (NMSA, 2001). They still focus on what is needed to prepare well both pre-service and continuing teachers who seek formal preparation for teaching young adolescents. They still include some "input" language, but by and large, they are written in performance language that describes outcomes of the preparation teachers received. Following on the heels of this change, the professional groups associated with NCATE all re-wrote their standards around performance-based language, including their standards relating to middle level preparation (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000; National Academy of Sciences, 1996).

Subject area organizations also re-wrote their national student standards, P–12, largely in performance-based language, and as well created a variety of texts, guidelines, manuals, and programs to help in-service teachers with their own continued learning and professional development. But subject-centered organizations largely accepted the existence of a middle level education concept for young adolescents and wrote these standards with the middle level in mind as a separate and distinct level of teaching. For example, the National Council of Teachers of English sponsored the *Standards in Practice, Grades 6–8* (Wilhelm, 1996) publication, which, through a series of scenarios of exemplary practice, operationalized the subject-centered NCTE standards at the middle grades level for in-service teachers. Sections end with a reflective reading about the connections of such topics as the writing process and authentic assessment of literacy with the standards themselves. While addressing student middle grades standards within the K–12 context, both the *National Science Education Standards* (1996) and *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* (2000) take a similar approach by creating learning rationales for the standards geared to the teaching audience at the middle level. Increasingly, professional development programs within states and districts, or sponsored by the national professional organizations, promoted this visibility of the specific educational needs of the middle level teacher (Hines, 2001; Svec, 1997).

The change in focus to performance-based standards governing middle grades teacher preparation (NMSA, 2001) and even professional development (National Staff Development Council, 1994; 2001) may not seem very threatening to the middle grades concept. Certainly, though, the continued focus on subject-centered standards could seem radically opposed to the concept, especially with the middle school's emphasis on interdisciplinary and integrated content. However, as mentioned earlier, educators can follow the dialogue and the negotiation of the middle level concept throughout the recent literature and policies for reform (Allen, 1999; Lewis, 1999; Swaim & Stefanich, 1996; Vars, 1997; Vars & Beane, 2000; Wheelock, 1998). Indeed, the National Middle School Association republished its manifesto, *This We Believe* (1982, 1992) as *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools* (National Middle School Association, 1995). In this republished version, the Association, in the midst of calls for content standards, reiterated the balance needed in the curriculum for the young adolescent in the middle school; arguing that the middle grades curriculum should be "challenging, integrative, and exploratory"(p. 20). The original emphasis on appropriate instruction (varied), appropriate assessment, and the appropriate preparation and continuing education for teachers of young adolescents remains powerfully stated, if re-couched in 1990s language. As a guideline for both preparation and continued professional development, it grounds the middle level educator's standards focus in the context of integration.

Timely too was the publication of *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). In this document there is far more definitiveness about the preparation and professional development needed for the middle grades teacher. While retaining the emphasis on the need for relevant curriculum and innovative instruction, the document situates middle school curriculum soundly within standards demanding high expectations of learners. But the *Turning Points 2000* call for the prepared teacher is different than a decade ago; it is far more assertive in its call for distinct preparation:

> *Turning Points* recommended that, in the absence of middle grades licensure or certification, states should at least provide teachers with the opportunity to earn a middle grades endorsement voluntarily. The experience of the past ten years suggests that this is one of the *least* [their emphasis] effective methods of ensuring special preparation for middle grades teachers. (p. 104)

And, as noted in an earlier section, *Turning Points 2000* admits that the original report in 1989 "paid too little attention to middle grades educators' need for effective professional development opportunities" (p. 110), a criticism also picked up by middle level teacher educators (Davis, 2001). Yet, one only has to remember the parallel development of notions of effective staff development over the last decade to understand why professional development at the middle level is only now receiving further scrutiny and heightened revision.

Indeed, if there is another central shift in general educational policy, it is the increased attention in the late 1990s to early 2000s on the continuing professional development of teachers in general. For example, the National Staff Development Council has yet again revised its general standards for professional development (2001) around the key principles alluded to earlier, including and especially results-based learning, or the focus on student learning. NSDC now includes twelve new general standards that exemplify central themes important for all professional development: learning communities, data driven and research based principles, collaboration, content taught in light of equity, and family involvement, among other such themes.

Beyond the attention to professional development standards in a new paradigm, including separate middle grades professional development standards, there is now a burgeoning literature on middle grades professional development. In partnership with other organizations and foundations whose roles include a focus on excellence of education for the middle grades, such as the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation or the National Middle School Association, the National Staff Development Council has in recent years featured publications not only on middle grades staff development standards (1994), but also texts devoted to staff development *programs* at the middle level (Mizell, 2002; Raimondo, Olsen, & Mizell, 2002). Probably the most visible and influential of the middle grades related staff development publications derived from recent policy is Killion's *What Works in the Middle: Results-based Staff Development* (1999). The publication includes research on the middle level and student achievement, followed by descriptions of exemplary professional development models in each subject area that have proven results in improving the achievement of middle level students.

THE NEW PARADIGM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The influence of the standards movement on the preparation and professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers has been widely documented in the literature cited in the previous section. As a result, the daily lives of new and experienced teachers have changed dramatically in the last decade as teachers are being asked to document more carefully student achievement according to student standards and account for the ways their instruction and classroom practice align with teacher standards. As a result of the importance placed on standardized test scores, the trend in the field of education, the media, and society at large has been to impose higher standards (as if standards were low before) on teachers and schools in order to improve American education. At the same time, as teachers and schools are being held almost solely responsible for student achievement, the field of education has begun to create professional development opportunities for teachers that meet professional development standards, retain and support teachers, and improve student test scores. Policy trends, as we saw in the previous section, mirror or have been the impetus for new trends in professional development at all levels.

As more is learned about the process of learning to teach and the ways in which teachers hold knowledge about pedagogy and content, professional development has moved in new directions that empower teachers and enable them to construct new knowledge and to renew their commitment to teaching. Professional development has become increasingly important given that the diverse context of schooling becomes more challenging and demanding by the minute. Specific to middle level education, increased research and resulting knowledge of early adolescent development, combined with the impact of the middle school movement, have contributed to changes in professional development programs in middle schools.

In this section, the reader will find a discussion of how professional development has evolved as it continues to be influenced by

- federal and state policy,
- local initiatives at the district and building level aimed at retaining teachers and improving student achievement,
- advances in the field of teacher knowledge and teacher learning aimed at empowering teachers as knowers, and
- the middle school movement designed to reform the education of early adolescents.

Dealing first with induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers, following is a discussion that outlines the nature of induction programs and explains the role of mentoring. Next, the section includes a discussion of how teacher research, action research, and collaborative inquiry have become credible and viable professional development alternatives. This noticeable shift in the paradigm of professional development that now emphasizes individual teacher and classroom needs is mirrored in the shift from what once was a focus on general pedagogical concerns and issues in whole school professional development programs to a focus on content and specific concerns of individual teachers and classrooms. Finally, in the "Implications" section, the reader will find a discussion of where middle level educators need to go from here in terms of professional development.

Induction for Retention and the Evolution of Mentoring

Citing burn out, disappointment, feelings of inadequacy, and stress as contributing factors, high numbers of beginning teachers continue to leave the profession within the first five years. Sources vary, but Villani (2002) says that 30 percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years, with a staggering 50 percent in urban and isolated rural areas (p. x). Moir and Gless (2001) emphasize the need for programs that support new teachers:

> Yet regardless of how good their preparation has been, teachers in their first classroom face an overwhelming number of complex problems. Often these issues must be dealt with quickly and, in the traditional system, without anyone to turn to for advice. New teachers working in isolation navigate a slow and painful learning curve. This trial-by-fire method exacts a high price on new teachers, their students, and the entire school community. (p. 110)

According to the United States Department of Education, the nation will need more than two million new teachers by the year 2010 (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996), which places increased pressure on university and college teacher preparation programs and on state and local school districts to prepare and support new teachers in ways that will ensure they stay in the profession. Added to the pressure to induct and retain new teachers into the profession is the pressure on schools to improve student achievement. During the last two decades, education in America has been characterized by a climate of frustration and impatience with K–12 schools and teachers, who are being asked to do more for more demanding and needy students, but with scarcer resources. A manifestation of the climate of frustration and impatience is the increasing pressure on schools to improve students' standardized test scores. Teacher education programs, state departments of education, and local school districts have answered by creating induction programs and models of professional development that seek to improve teacher practice through a variety of methods.

Repeatedly literature on the experiences of beginning teachers emphasizes that the first years of teaching are critical in retaining new teachers. Napper-Owen and Phillips (1995) assert that the first year of teaching "sets the tone for the development of the teacher" (p. 325). Moir and Gless (2001) say,

> This is a unique phase of teacher development, as well as a period of enculturation and socialization. . . induction will happen with, or without a program. Thus, it is critical that educational leaders who design programs to support new teachers must ask the following essential questions: "Induction into what, and for what purpose?" (p. 110)

Because beginning teachers are often still given the most challenging classes to teach and still expected to coach and sponsor extracurricular sports and activities, teacher preparation programs, state departments of education, local school districts, and building administrators have begun to recognize the need for and value in having effective induction programs. Retention is particularly challenging for urban and rural school districts. Therefore, induction and in-service professional development programs aimed specifically at teachers in urban or rural settings who have racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse students as well as students who come from highly diverse socio-economic backgrounds are of great import to retaining teachers (Adger & Clair, 1999; Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 1997). Typically induction models implement some form of mentoring to support and guide new teachers through their first year or two of teaching.

Common Goals of Induction Programs

Clearly, the consensus in the literature is that new teachers need quality induction programs aimed at supporting them professionally, intellectually, socially, and even emotionally as they work through the challenges of their first years of teaching (Beerer, 2002; Huling-Austin & Resta, 2001; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Villani, 2002; Wood, 2001). Using slightly different language, Huling-Austin, Odell, Ishler, Kay, and Edelfelt (1989) and Wood (2001) offer the following goals as essential for quality induction programs:

- Increase new teacher retention
- Promote professional growth and personal well-being
- Establish system of assessment
- Satisfy state and local mandates
- Orient new teachers to the profession (locally and globally)

Most researchers, teacher educators, mentor teachers, and beginning teachers understand that, while these are useful and valid goals for induction programs, we must go beyond even these broad goals. People like Darling-Hammond (1997); Feiman-Nemser (1992); Lortie (1975); Moir and Gless (2001); Rogers and Babinski (2002); Villani (2002); Zeichner and Gore (1990) concur. Moir and Gless (2002) further assert,

> Quality induction must consciously set and clearly articulate new professional norms and expectations. New teachers must be supported in taking responsibility not only for what goes on in their classrooms, but also for what transpires in the greater educational community of which they are a part. (p. 110)

Villani (2002) believes induction programs must "be more than a buddy system," "provide more than practical guidance on school policies and procedures," and "be more than generalized support" (pp. x–xi).

Common Goals of Mentoring Models

Walker-Hopp (2002) contends,

> The goal of mentoring educational professionals should be to provide ongoing opportunities for collaboration and collegiality that result in meaningful growth and consistent renewal in teaching. An important goal of mentor-

> ing is also to foster understanding of the essential elements of teaching and learning. (p. 5)

The trend has been for state legislatures or departments of education to mandate induction programs, and then leave it to the local school districts or buildings to create induction programs specific to their respective goals, needs, and funding situations. As school districts and individual buildings began exploring the kind of induction program that would suit their needs and goals, mentoring emerged as a natural and essential element of quality induction programs. The constructivist approach to learning has heavily influenced the research and work being done with collaboration in teacher learning and professional development. Mentoring and collaboration historically have been inherent and effective components and offshoots of the interdisciplinary teaming concept. The literature is convincing regarding the benefits of mentoring in the induction process of new teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; David, 2000; Fullan, 1993; Graham, Hudson-Ross, Adkins, McWhorter, & McDuffie-Stewart, 1999; Villani, 2002).

Borrowing from other professions that institute apprenticeship models, the field of education has come to realize the value in mentor-beginner relationships for induction programs and professional development in general for in-service teachers. Fullan's (1993) "interactive professionalism"—the ability to collaborate and converse with all the stakeholders: students, parents, colleagues, larger community—informed the University of Central Florida's partnership with local school districts as they developed a model of mentoring for professional development (Walker- Hopp, 2002).

The basis of the collaborative professional development effort is to establish mentoring models that foster "principle-centered action," a model of professional development that is based on a set of common/agreed upon guiding principles or "foundation of beliefs" and fosters mentoring relationships that enable collaborative professional relationships (p. 4). Walker-Hopp states, "Mentoring relationships result in learning and growing together, knowing the self, making the commitment, and trusting the process" (p. 3).

Similarly, the work of Graham, Hudson-Ross, Adkins, McWhorter, and McDuffie-Stewart (1999) at the University of Georgia includes bringing together preservice teachers, beginning teachers, and experienced in-service teachers to learn and work collaboratively in partnership with university teacher education faculty. Graham and her colleagues elaborate:

> Critical to the success of an induction program is the mentor-beginning teacher relationship, the ability of the mentor to "mentor," funding, and, of course, time. Effective mentoring requires more than pairing a beginning teacher with an experienced teacher in the building and some casual conversations. The examples mentioned are testament to the complexities of creat-

> ing and maintaining a successful mentoring situation. Clearly stated goals and objectives, as well as an understanding of the role of the mentor and mentee are important. Resources, time and funding often determine whether or not a mentoring program is successful. Ganser (1995) says, "At a minimum, beginning teachers and mentors need time together, both to be in one another's classroom and to meet together. . . . The time needed can have a price tag . . ." (p. 5). Training for mentors and on-going assessment are also crucial to a mentoring program (e.g., cognitive coaching). Ganser and others assert that effective mentoring programs occur most often when considered as "staff development project[s] for everyone" involved. (p. 5)

Mentoring programs aimed at supporting the professional development of beginning teachers have increased since the early 1980s and the benefits of such programs have been widely documented (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; David, 2000; Fullan, 1993; Graham, Hudson-Ross, Adkins, McWhorter, & McDuffie-Stewart, 1999; Villani, 2002). However, while researchers began studying the impact of mentoring on the professional development of mentors in the late 1980s, it was not until the last five years that the literature began to reflect an even more present emphasis on the benefits to mentors (David, 2000; Holloway, 2001; Huling-Austin & Resta, 2001; Resta, Huling, White, & Matschek, 1997). Huling-Austin & Resta (2001, pp. 3–4) cite the following as the major benefits that mentors enjoy:

- Professional Competency: In addition to gaining new ideas from beginning teachers, mentor teachers believe the quality of their teaching improves. As well, they tend to apply what they learn about cognitive coaching in their own classrooms.
- Reflective Practice: Engaging in a mentoring relationship almost requires that experienced teachers reflect on their own practice and beliefs about teaching. Working with beginning teachers and becoming consciously more reflective often rejuvenates experienced teachers (Stevens, 1995).
- Psychological Benefits: In addition to feeling satisfaction from supporting beginning teachers, mentors often experience a sense of empowerment and professional significance as a result of mentoring beginning teachers.
- Collaboration: Working collaboratively with mentees often enables mentor teachers to more clearly articulate their beliefs about teaching, which results from reflecting on their own practice during the mentoring process. They report developing improved self-esteem and more confidence as a result of the collaborative relationships, as well.
- Contributions to Teacher Leadership: As a result of training and experience, mentors often move into leadership positions in their

schools. They are recognized for their knowledge of coaching, observing, and mentoring.

- Mentoring Combined with Inquiry: Mentors often engage in and/or participate in university research projects that enable them to look more critically at their own teaching practice.

The successful mentor/mentee relationship is reciprocal, collaborative, and collegial, and both parties benefit professionally. Ultimately, students reap the benefits too as they are exposed to teachers committed to their own professional development through collaborative models.

Action Research, Collaborative Inquiry, Study Groups, PDS, and Teaming

Informed by the work of Darling-Hammond (1997) in particular, Clair and Adger (1999) posit the following conditions for effective professional development:

- District and school policies must support coherent and integrated professional development.
- District and school leadership must make student, teacher, and organizational learning a priority.
- There must be sufficient time and resources for promising professional development to take hold. (pp. 1–4)

Further citing the work of Knowles (1980), Little (1993), Renyi (1996), and Sparks and Hirsh (1997), Clair and Adger (1999) say,

> There is a growing consensus in the literature regarding the elements of effective professional development for teachers. . . It incorporates principles of adult learning. . . It is designed with teacher input. . . It fosters critical reflection and meaningful collaboration. . . It is internally coherent and rigorous, and it is sustained over the long term. (ERIC Digest ED435185)

Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, and Hewson (1996) argue that professional development experiences must

- be driven by a well-defined image of effective classroom learning and teaching;
- provide opportunities for teachers to build knowledge and skills;
- use or model with teachers the strategies teachers will use with their students;
- build a learning community;
- support teachers to serve in leadership roles;

- provide links to other parts of the education system; and
- enable participants to continuously assess themselves. (p. 36)

As the paradigm of teacher knowledge has shifted from a positivistic model that positioned teachers as deliverers of teacher-proof subject matter to a more constructivist model that recognizes teachers as producers of content *and* pedagogical knowledge in an ever changing, ever demanding field, so has the paradigm of professional development shifted. Collaboration, dialogue, and reflection are integral parts of the new paradigm. Informed by Vygotsky (1978), Bahktin (1981), and more recently Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993), Shulman (1999) and others, the new paradigm of professional development encompasses concepts such as community, dialogue, and the social nature of learning. The following section examines the new paradigm of professional development that begins with a discussion of teachers as researchers (action research) and how teachers involved in collaborative inquiry/study groups contribute to the construction of teacher knowledge; teaming at the middle school as a model for professional development; and the professional development school (PDS) model.

Action Research, Teacher as Researcher, and Collaborative Inquiry

The research consistently tells us that professional development framed in an inquiry model (collaborative inquiry, action research, and teachers as researchers) fosters grassroots reform at the building level and enables teachers to reflect on and change their practice through sustained professional development opportunities, which in turn leads to improved student achievement (Burnaford, Beane, & Brodhagen, 1994; Calhoun, 1994; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Noffke, 1997; Noffke & Stevenson, 1995; Sparks, 1994; and others). The fields of science and math education as well as literacy and language education offer the most numerous examples of action research (Feldman, 1996; Hollingsworth, 1994; Madsen & Gallagher, 1992; Smith, 1996, among others).

Teaming

The middle school concept with its teaming aspect naturally fosters collaboration among colleagues. Teachers working in a building that subscribes to the middle school concept are primed to accept and implement a teacher research model of professional development. Working in a two-way bilingual program, Cruz (2000) examined how the structure of a middle school promoted or impeded professional collaborations. McLaughlin, Earle, Hall, Miller, and Wheeler (1995) describe the research team project they participated in and discuss the group's key learning about students and teachers. Angelle's (2002) study of the socialization experiences of middle school beginning teachers revealed that interdisciplinary teaming, when implemented to enhance professional development, helped beginning teachers through the socialization process.

Professional Development Schools

Another example of the shift in the professional development paradigm is the Professional Development School (PDS) model, which fosters partnerships between university/college programs and K–12 schools and includes preservice teachers in early field experiences as well as beginning teachers working with mentor teachers. The work of Ambrose, Natale, Murphey, and Schumacher (1999) examines the responsibilities of four of the key players in a PDS endeavor: a university faculty member, middle school principal, and two middle school teachers.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL MOVEMENT, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND SCHOOL REFORM

Ongoing professional development is the hallmark of teacher learning and the key to better classroom instruction that leads to improved student achievement. It is also integral to school reform initiatives across the country. The middle school movement is an example of how reform efforts are possible and effective at the building and classroom level. Middle level professionals (teachers, administrators, and university faculty) continue to design and implement professional development specific to the needs of middle level teachers. Cooney (2000) reports that in addition to specialized preparation and licensure for middle school teachers, "ongoing professional development to improve middle school teacher quality" is also needed to ensure improved student achievement.

Reform initiatives are one of the positive byproducts of the shift in the paradigm of professional development. Particularly for middle level education, professional development has moved teachers and schools in the direction of school reform in the last two decades. The relationship between professional development initiatives and school reform as manifested in the emergence of teacher leaders is being touted as one of the most effective means for school reform (Thornton, Langrall, Jones, & Swafford, 2001). In the Thornton, Langrall, Jones, and Swafford example, a mid-size urban city middle school hoped to provide professional development for mathematics teachers that would increase student achievement. The unforeseen benefit was in the surfacing of teacher leaders, who became committed to the program and school curriculum reforms across the district. In the name of improving student achievement, professional development programs that support new and experienced teachers have become the foundation for K–12 school reform across the nation

For middle level educators, as has been stated in previous sections, the shift in professional development came to individual schools depending on how and when the middle school movement was adopted. The spirit of reform in middle level education, particularly, has in some situations moved professional development changes along more rapidly. For example, teachers involved in the changes that occur when a traditional junior high school restructures to become a middle school (with teams of teachers working together collaboratively to integrate curriculum and support early adolescent students) almost instantly became aware of the potential in professional development programs that offered on-going teacher education and fostered collaborative peer coaching and action research initiatives.

Implications: Where Does Middle Level Professional Development Go from Here?

While the implications abound for support of the relationship between teacher professional development and student achievement, the field currently lacks a corpus of literature and research specifically explaining that relationship. At the middle level, we need to move in the direction of exploring that relationship. Interdisciplinary teaming, collaborative inquiry and study groups, and effective mentoring are all leading us in the right direction. We simply need to continue the march and conduct more work in the area of student achievement. It would seem that as long as the educational community is enamored with standardized testing as the most "persuasive" mode of assessment, we will find it very difficult to step outside that paradigm and offer studies and work that show convincing evidence linking student achievement with professional development. Joyce and Showers (2003) and others have begun to move us in the right direction and offer studies that reveal the connection.

Wood (2001) explains some of the challenges facing induction programs; the same challenges are indicative of most professional development programs: time and funding as well as effective collaborations between university and K–12 schools that would encompass preservice preparation and in-service staff development. It would seem that schools, federal and state legislators, local communities, and parents have begun to recognize and understand what teachers have known for years—that there is an absolute need for meaningful, on-going professional development if teachers and schools are to work effectively to meet the changing needs of students.

NOTE

1. The phrase "the history of the middle level school" encompasses both the original junior high school and its historical successor, the current middle school.

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CHAPTER 6

EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What Is It?

P. Elizabeth Pate and Katherine F. Thompson
The University of Georgia

ABSTRACT

Since the middle school movement began in earnest over thirty years ago, teachers have been attending in-services, after-school meetings, seminars, and conferences as a way to get "developed professionally" for their roles as middle grades educators. But, what is professional development and just what makes it effective? This chapter begins with a definition of effective professional development and a discussion of key elements. Then we offer seven recommendations to consider when planning effective professional development activities. Embedded throughout the chapter are the voices of middle school teachers reflecting upon their professional development activities. All the teachers indicated their professional development experiences deepened their knowledge and skills. The professional development occurred in a variety of ways, sometimes individually, but most often within a community of learners. In addition, in each instance, the professional development was

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relevant, focused, and embedded in work; held in a supportive context with adequate time; was collegial and collaborative; and finally, empowering.

> *I have thoroughly enjoyed this [week-long] trip! Before we started I didn't know anything about water or how it really affected people. As a teacher, I realized how ignorant I was. This trip has taught me so much! I had never visited a dam before, let alone gone kayaking down a river. I actually got to see how everything affects the river. It was wonderful having my entire team here to bounce ideas off of. We have come up with so many ideas.*
>
> —Emily, pseudonym;
> learning expedition as professional development

> *For me the most important elements included (1) gaining knowledge about the various curriculum models available and that it's okay to pick and choose what best fits one's needs; (2) that all teachers in the 4 disciplines have a lot of the same concerns; (3) that the arts are significantly vital in the development of children's self-esteem; (4) curriculum writing makes you really analyze what you are doing or not doing; (5) spiraling is important for complete understanding; and (6) reflection, which I do all the time, is necessary to be an effective teacher.*
>
> —Ariana, pseudonym;
> conference as professional development

> *I am so excited about my service-learning project!! I have been walking around singing, "Seek and ye shall find...ask and it shall be given...lalalalala!" Today three master gardeners from the State Botanical Garden came and worked with my class. They will be with us as volunteers until we get our gardens underway. They are at least as excited as we are. I'm so glad I took this class!*
>
> —Suzanne, pseudonym;
> graduate school education as professional development

INTRODUCTION

All across the United States, middle school teachers are engaging in professional development activities. Some of those activities are forced upon them and some are sought out. Some are effective and some are not. The above quotations represent the voices of middle school teachers involved in professional development activities, talking about what their experiences meant to them. What is meant by the concept of *professional development*? What does a review of the literature tell us about the most important elements of professional development, and what recommendations can be made for optimizing the professional development of middle school teachers? Finally, what are the benefits of effective professional development? These are the questions that we will attempt to answer in this chapter. First, we will discuss effective professional development. Next, we will present key elements of professional development activities as identified from a review of the literature. This will be followed by seven recommendations for consideration when planning effective professional development activities. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the benefits of effective professional development for middle grades teachers and, ultimately, their students. Embedded throughout the chapter are additional voices of teachers sharing their thoughts about their professional development experiences. These examples are gleaned from reflections, discussions, writings, evaluations, and unsolicited correspondence from middle school teachers involved in many types of professional development, including learning expeditions, in-services, conferences, action research, leadership roles, individual on-going learning, teaming, teacher groups, school-wide/multi-year efforts, multi-school/multi-year efforts, and graduate school education. We urge you to "listen" to these teachers…their words can enlighten us about what can happen when professional development is effective.

WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND WHAT MAKES IT EFFECTIVE?

Since the middle school movement began in earnest over thirty years ago, teachers have been attending in-services, after-school meetings, seminars, and conferences as a way to get "developed professionally" for their roles as middle grades educators. During the 1970s, most professional development opportunities addressed middle school organization. For example, in-services related to interdisciplinary teaming, flexible scheduling, and exploratory courses were common. During the 1980s, middle grades teachers who were interested in instruction and assessment were able to participate in professional development opportunities on such topics as teaching and learning strategies, models of instruction, and assessment tools. During the 1990s, professional development opportunities were often related to curriculum and assessment. In-services on interdisciplinary curriculum, service learning, and integrative curriculum were readily available as were in-services on alternative assessment. During the 2000s, professional development opportunities appear to focus much more on subject-specific content and school, teacher, and student accountability. All of these opportunities, ideally, are designed to make teachers more effective. But, what is professional development, and just what makes it effective?

The concept of *professional development* implies two things: (1) a professional and (2) development of that professional. For the purpose of this chapter, a middle school professional is defined as an educator of young adolescents aged 10–15. Development is defined as the continual deepening of knowledge and skills (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

What makes professional development effective is action—action taken by the middle school professional related to the teaching of young adolescents. Teachers must take something from professional development and make changes in their teaching. Without change, professional development benefits only the adult engaged in the opportunity and not necessarily the middle school student. That is the key to effective professional development: Teachers taking new knowledge about young adolescents, parents, community members, content, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and so on, and using that information to make a difference in the lives of their students.

Professional development can occur in a variety of ways (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2002). It can be informal or formal. Informal professional development refers to individual, on-going, often unstructured, learning on the part of a teacher. For example, informal professional development can occur when a teacher is a collaborative member of an interdisciplinary team. During team planning time and serendipitous conversations in the hallway, team members share content, teaching strategies, and knowledge about young adolescents. In this instance, a professional is engaged in continual deepening of knowledge and skills. When the teacher changes how he or she approaches teaching based on the team's interaction, then this informal professional development is effective. For example, after a discussion among team members about the best ways to identify students' learning styles, the teacher designs and implements a learning-styles inventory. Then he or she targets instruction to address identified student learning styles.

On the other hand, formal professional development refers to preplanned, structured activities generally focused on a specific topic. Examples of formal professional development include enrollment and attendance at conferences, in-services, and graduate classes. Again, what makes formal professional development effective is when the teachers take information back into their classrooms and makes changes in teaching.

Individual teachers and teacher groups can engage in professional development. One teacher may identify a personal learning goal and engage in a series of professional development opportunities to meet that goal. For example, a teacher may want to know more about empowerment and how empowerment transfers to the classroom. He or she may choose to take leadership roles in the school and district, participate in the National Middle School Association's on-line professional development activities, obtain a doctoral degree, and present at conferences. The combination of this continual learning might mean a change from a teacher-directed classroom to a democratic classroom in which the students and teacher make decisions together about what and how learning occurs. Teacher groups may include teachers from a team or school with a shared context or a group of teachers unknown to each other. An example of a teacher group with a shared context would be a Critical Friends Group (CFG). In a CFG, teachers form a reflective, democratic learning community for the purpose of improving teaching and learning (Bambino, 2002). A CFG may be comprised of teachers within a school or across schools. For example, in one middle school CFG, teachers from across the grade levels volunteered to meet at least monthly to work through "dilemmas," or issues, relevant to their work with middle school students. Teachers examined student work, teacher-constructed tests, homework policies, and student motivation.

> *When our CFG started a year ago, I was interested in the concept of teacher dialogue but I wasn't "sold on it." Now one year later, I've experienced some of the most powerful and meaningful professional discussions I've ever had. Even when I had no connection to the dilemma being posed, simply being there as a group member added so much to my understanding of myself as a teacher. I look forward with eager anticipation to our next meeting!*
>
> —Angie, pseudonym;
> teacher group as professional development

A group of teachers unknown to each other may enroll in a seminar on the Early Adolescence Generalist Standards for National Board Certification (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001). As a group they learn about the twelve standards (knowledge of young adolescents, knowledge of subject matter, instructional resources, learning environment, meaningful learning, respect for diversity, multiple paths to knowledge, social development, assessment, reflective practice, family partnerships, collaboration with colleagues) and share how those standards translate to classroom practice. They form a network of educators with a need for common learning.

> *I feel strongly that teachers should be continuous learners; there was so much I did not know about middle level teaching and learning. The books and articles I have read have contributed to my knowledge of an array of educational issues, and the discussions I have had with classmates have been thought-provoking and have impacted my beliefs and practices.*
>
> —Patricia, pseudonym;
> individual on-going learning as professional development

> *Another avenue for professional development is action research. A fellow teacher/doctoral student and I took a university course on how to conduct this type of research. We decided to investigate what teachers in our school and students in our classes thought about interdisciplinary teaming. This research has resulted in academic papers being*

> *presented at national and international conferences. The study helped me to realize that there are opportunities in every school to learn about and improve the ways teachers teach and students learn.*
>
> —Laura, pseudonym;
> action research as professional development

A professional and development of that professional are inherent aspects of the concept of professional development. Individuals and groups of teachers can engage in formal or informal professional development activities. What makes professional development effective is action—teachers reflecting on their new knowledge, making decisions about their teaching, and implementing change in the classroom.

KEY ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Numerous articles and several research studies (Garet et al., 2001; Shields, Marsh, & Adelman, 1998; Sprinthall, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1996; Weiss, Montgomery, Ridgway, & Bond, 1998) have addressed the key elements of professional development. Researchers apparently share a common understanding that teachers need professional development regularly and on a routine basis to improve their ability to teach. The need for continual, targeted professional development for middle school teachers is one of the recommendations put forth in *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). What are the key elements of professional development? The following is a discussion of key elements of professional development that have been identified during a review of the literature.

Relevant, Focused, and Embedded in Work

Most middle schools are actively engaged in school reform; they are reviewing what is being done well and what needs to be improved upon and making short- and long-term plans to address identified needs. With school reform comes the necessity for effective professional development (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2002; Guskey, 2000; Hirsh, 2000; Killion, 1999). Professional development experiences must be relevant, focused, and embedded in the work of teachers and schools (Downs, 2000; Garet, et al., 2001; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). For professional development to be effective it needs to be relevant. A relevant professional development experience is entirely applicable to the teaching situation. It is not based on a passing fad. It makes sense to the teacher and fits within the philosophies of the teacher and the school. How is relevancy determined? By asking the teachers. Middle school teachers are the most knowledgeable about their own needs and the needs of their students.

Professional development experiences should be focused. Experiences should be developed that focus on deepening teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills and solving important problems related to teaching and learning (Sparks, 2002). According to Sparks, educators themselves must determine school and teacher needs. A strong rationale must be provided to justify professional development, both cognitively for the teacher and economically for the school. Focused professional development experiences are linked to standards (Cooney & Bottoms, 2003; Jackson and Davis, 2002); address content, process, and context (National Staff Development Council, 1994); work toward improving student achievement (George, 2002); and attend to student needs, issues, and concerns.

Professional development should be embedded in the daily work of teachers and schools (Maute, 2003; Sparks, 2002; Sprinthall, et al., 1996). According to Sparks (2002), professional development opportunities that address academic content and are integrated into the daily life of the school are more likely to be sustained and to have significant impact in the classroom. And, teacher enthusiasm for professional development is greatest in schools that make both formal and informal learning an integral part of the teachers' work (Sprinthall et al., 1996).

Supportive Context and Adequate Time

A supportive context and adequate time for involvement, questioning, reflection, and assessment are key elements of professional development (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999; George, 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2002; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Sparks, 2002; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997; Wormeli, 2003). Professional development requires support such as adequate personnel, fiscal resources, and collegial and administrative approval. In a research study of four middle school teachers' attempts to conceptualize and implement curriculum integration, Homestead (1998) found supportive school structures and organizations to be important elements in the teachers' professional development. These teachers deemed the principal's support to be crucial. He showed his support by promoting a curriculum integration summer workshop and talking positively about trying new ideas in the classroom. Teammates were also seen as a vital source of support, as was the media specialist. Because curriculum integration requires access to all kinds of information, the media specialist was considered to be very important. The after-school group, consisting of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers who met weekly to discuss and share, was also a source of support. Having an after-school support group as a place to take questions, receive help, and discuss problems and successes was another factor in the teachers' efforts to conceptualize and implement curriculum integration. George (2002), in agreement with Homestead's findings, maintains that principals should support teachers in professional development activities not just financially, but emotionally and professionally in any way they can.

Effective professional development requires time. According to Wheatley (2002), schools that are truly learning communities require time for teachers to think, study, and collaborate during the school day. Professional development opportunities should provide time for teachers to think how they might take their learning into the classroom, time to research additional theories and strategies, and time to reflect on their action (Garet et al., 2001; Sparks, 2002). We all know that so-called "one-shot" in-services as professional development are useful only as topical overviews. It takes extended periods of professional development for change to occur in classrooms and schools (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2002; Guskey, 2000).

Collegial and Collaborative

Effective professional development often occurs in a collegial (having a common understanding) and collaborative (working together) context. While a single teacher engaged in his or her own professional development is important and necessary, teams and groups of teachers (professional learning communities) focused on enhancing their teaching practice are critical to the middle school concept. The spirit of an effective learning community is one of shared responsibility and collaborative inquiry (Feiman-Nemser, et al., 1999; Griffin, 1986; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Little, 1997; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; O'Doherty, 2003; Sparks, 2002). Effective professional development often involves mentoring, guidance, and advice (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999; George, 2002; Paterson, 2003). Professional learning communities provide the scaffolding (supportive assistance) necessary for action to occur. Collegial and collaborative professional development engages groups of teachers in collective participation (Garet, et al., 2001; Renyi, 1996).

Empowering

Professional development should have an empowering effect on teachers and be results-oriented (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Renyi, 1996). Empowerment creates wise teachers, teachers more likely to continue their professional development (McEwin, Dickinson, Erb, & Scales, 1995; Sparks, 2002) and more likely to make changes in their practice (Garet, et al., 2001).

Effective professional development that leads to teacher empowerment ultimately leads to action. Empowerment can be defined as taking action to influence one's professional life (Thompson, 1999). According to Thompson, several conditions affect empowerment, including graduate studies, action research, supportive colleagues, collaboration with university professors, and formal professional development. It is the combination of these professional experiences, not any one individually, that leads to feelings of greater empowerment and to increased effectiveness in the classroom.

> *I have worked with colleagues on an interdisciplinary team who are knowledgeable about teaching and learning, who have been responsible for their own professional development, and who have been active in school activities. This collegial environment has created an atmosphere of empowerment for our team, as we have become known as a strong team in our school. Most importantly, however, we have supported each other in our endeavors to educate students. Being a member of a team has broadened my perspective on a variety of issues concerning our students and our school, as we have addressed concerns affecting our classroom curriculum and the learning environment. My teammates have been a source of encouragement when things I tried in the classroom did not go well and a cheering section when I succeeded. We learn from each other. Knowing that I had the professional and personal support of these colleagues has empowered me to become a better teacher.*
>
> —Krista, pseudonym;
> teaming as professional development

> *Overall I enjoyed the professional development conference! It has really inspired me to try some new and creative teaching techniques. I am leaving with several new ideas that I know the students will love. Although I have always been friendly with other teachers at my school, now I know the extreme importance of collaboration! I'm learning much more about other disciplines. I also have many sources that I did not know about before the conference.*
>
> —Reston, pseudonym;
> conference as professional development

> *Our school recently won the state Middle School of Excellence award and was a finalist for the National Blue Ribbon School award. While we* [faculty members] *were extremely proud of our growth, we knew we needed to continually seek professional development opportunities for even better ways to make our curriculum meet the needs of our students. Since our award, we asked for professional development activities designed to address topics such as technology, mathematics manipulatives, alternative assessment, reading practices, interdisciplinary unit design, curriculum integration, and conflict resolution and peer mediation. These were areas we felt we needed to know*

> *more about. Some teachers chose to participate and some did not. We were not forced . . . they were tailored according to our needs and the needs of our students.*
>
> —Nancy, pseudonym;
> school-wide/multi-year effort as professional development

> *I am an active participant in the professional development of my school. I have developed district and classroom curriculum. I have implemented innovative instructional strategies, and I have been a member of the school's leadership council and planning committee, which guide the school's direction.*
>
> —Joan, pseudonym;
> leadership role as professional development

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Effective professional development cannot be mandated. Yes, teachers can be required to engage in professional development, but it will only become effective when the teachers have a need to know. Teachers have to want to improve their teaching. Openness to new ideas, desire to better meet the needs of students, and discontent with the status quo are characteristics of life-long learners. These learners become the teachers who make change happen. Based upon our review of the literature and our professional judgment, here are key recommendations for consideration when planning effective professional development activities:

- Promote internal/external and informal/formal professional development opportunities
- Involve all teachers, support personnel, and administrators in professional development.
- Determine school, teacher, and student needs so that professional development is relevant.
- Identify knowledgeable instructors for formal professional development so that experience is credible.
- Provide time to discuss, share, and engage in reflection.
- Document professional development experiences.
- Evaluate professional development activities.

Promote Internal/External and Informal/Formal Professional Development Opportunities

Teacher professional development is ongoing. There is always a new theory to learn, an alternative strategy to try, or an innovative way to engage students in their learning. Veteran teachers of many years can attest to the need to stay current in their teaching practices.

> *Although I may have been a good beginning teacher (as was reflected in student and parent comments, as well as administrative evaluations), my first students were not nearly as empowered as those who have entered my classroom during the past few years. Because I am more knowledgeable about curricular and instructional alternatives, assessment, learning styles, and adolescent development, I have created a more constructive learning environment in my classroom. I am a more confident teacher, taking risks with new ideas and innovations. My students help me make curricular decisions and participate in designing instruction and evaluation. The knowledge my students have acquired has empowered them*
>
> —Kate, pseudonym;
> teaching experience as professional development

For the much less experienced teacher, the opportunities to further improve their development are even more critical. "Teachers begin their professional lives as incomplete products. Four or even five years of preparation do not give teachers the many skills and insights needed. Teaching, like medicine, is a profession that calls for its members to be refreshed and updated as new ideas and materials come to the fore" (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997, p. 151).

No matter how many years practitioners have taught, opportunities for targeted training are necessary. According to *No Child Left Behind: Implications for Middle Level Teachers* (George, 2002), targeted training involves gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data in order to make sound decisions about how to most effectively improve student achievement.

A variety of opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development are critical, and these experiences should be diverse in their approaches. Internal professional development is determined by middle level educators for their particular schools or teaching situations. Internal professional development frequently occurs in the school setting, whether it is during the school day, after the school day, or during the summer. External professional development is offered by outside sources (e.g., the school district, the state department of education, or educational associations). Educators should participate in both internal and external professional development. Through participation in internal professional development, teachers can learn information and strategies specific to their school and classroom needs. By participating in external professional development, middle level educators can benefit from networking with other educators and may gain knowledge and skills of which they were not previously aware.

Middle level educators should also participate in both formal and informal professional development. "In-service days, faculty meetings, grade level meetings, department meetings, team meetings are a starting point but insufficient to sustain innovation and collaboration" (Sparks, 2002). While most educators think formal short-term workshop when they hear the words "professional development," there are other means of improving teacher practice. For example, teachers may enroll in graduate courses or apply to become National Board Certified as means of formal professional development.

Much meaningful professional development can also occur through informal opportunities. Middle level teachers can engage in action research in their individual classrooms or on their teams. Teachers can enhance their professional development through membership in educational organizations or attending national, state, or regional conferences. "Wise and experienced middle grades teachers are, therefore, a product of formal educational experiences, ongoing education in the schools, and continuing professional development and personal reflection. As such learners, wise and experienced teachers maintain a lifelong commitment to learning" (McEwin, et al., 1995, p. 9). In addition, when schools make both informal and formal learning a fundamental part of teachers' work, teachers exhibit a greater degree of enthusiasm toward professional development (Sprinthall, et al., 1996).

Involve All Teachers, Support Personnel, and Administrators in Professional Development

According to Sparks (2002), professional development is founded on a sense of collegiality and collaboration among teachers and between teachers and administrators in solving important problems related to teaching and learning. For professional development to be effective, *everyone* impacted by the problems being addressed or the program being implemented must be meaningfully involved at all levels of development. "If the professional development of middle grades teachers is to reach its full potential, individuals, institutions, professional associations, and other key stakeholders must play major roles" (McEwin, et al., 1995, p. 38).

Teacher involvement may include participating in needs assessment surveys, writing professional development goals and objectives, creating relevant short- or long-term workshops, and leading professional development experiences (e.g., workshops, seminars, graduate courses, conference presentations). Teachers may also participate in peer observations, become supervisors to colleagues or student teachers, or act as coaches to their colleagues (Cohen & Ball, 1990). Paterson (2003) found that teachers are generally receptive to coaching, but are especially so in middle schools where they are accustomed to working collaboratively. Whether formal or informal, teachers play a vital role in the professional development of colleagues.

Administrators should also engage in professional development, but especially when the professional development experience occurs at their school and is aimed at the needs of the students, teachers, and/or school. As instructional leaders of the school, it is important that they participate in professional development with their teachers to improve teaching and learning (Center for Collaborative Education, 1998, p. 6) and to support those educators in their schools who are also committed to doing so. As Jackson and Davis (2000) contend, "A principal who exerts instructional and curricular leadership by learning alongside teachers is better able to create common ground within the school on what good practice looks like and what the schools' goals for improving student performance should be" (p. 158).

Determine School, Teacher, and Student Needs so That Professional Development is Relevant

Before effective professional development can occur, educators must assess their needs. Needs assessment may be informal or formal depending upon the nature of the professional development. If the professional development is formal and targeted, participants should participate in a needs assessment survey prior to the writing of the professional development goals and objectives. Individual educators must continually assess their own needs so as to seek out those opportunities that will assist in their continued growth and development.

Administrator and teacher leadership are important to the development and distribution of needs assessment surveys. Oftentimes, teachers and principals see problems differently or fail to recognize a need due to their different roles in the school. To ensure that the data collected from the surveys result in meaningful professional development, it is essential that various perspectives be solicited.

Another way that educators may ascertain their needs is to engage in action research in their classrooms and school (Cohen & Ball, 1990). In action research, teachers collect data for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. By studying their own settings, educators are able to construct relevant professional development unique to their needs.

No matter what methods are used to discover the professional development needs of the educators in the school, professional development needs identification should be linked to teacher and school goals. If professional development is aligned with the school's targeted areas of improvement, teachers will be more likely to perceive the professional development experience as relevant and applicable.

Identify Knowledgeable Instructors for Formal Professional Development so It is Credible

Selection of the instructor is often the key to the success of a formal professional development experience. It is not uncommon for teachers to be excited about the subject matter of a professional development course only to be disappointed with the delivery of the content. It is the responsibility of all those involved—administrators, teachers, and support personnel—to be knowledgeable about outstanding experts in the field.

Encouraging the formation of a professional development team at the school level is an effective way to identify knowledgeable instructors for professional development so that the experiences are credible. This team could not only survey teachers and administrators to determine needs; they could also identify and solicit the most appropriate experts for school-site courses, and work with the school district to ensure that relevant and appropriate professional development opportunities are offered at the district level.

> *It is always nice for students to gain knowledge about the field from those who are currently teaching. The instructor was able to widen my view. She is obviously very knowledgeable about the subject matter. She has a contagious passion for teaching. Our projects demonstrate our learning. I plan to use projects as assessment in my classroom more.*
>
> —David, pseudonym;
> weeklong workshop as professional development

One way to learn about experts is to talk with other educators who may be able to suggest potential instructors. Subscribing to professional journals also enables one to become familiar with specialists in particular fields. By attending regional, state, or national conferences, educators can learn about experts and begin networking with them to establish connections. Local teachers are another source of potential professional development instructors. Teachers are an invaluable resource. Their knowledge and expertise can be unparalleled, especially when struggling with issues directly related to their particular schools. Who better to lead a professional development workshop than the teachers who have found ways to address the identified problems? Who knows the students, parents, community, and school climate better than the professionals who work there?

> *I didn't realize all that was going on in our school in regard to reading instruction. As a science teacher, I didn't think it applied to me. After participating in our school's*

> *reading professional development day, I realize that reading instruction is the responsibility of us all. I also learned more about* [our school's reading incentive computer program]. *My new-found knowledge will enable me to support our students as they participate in this motivational program.*
>
> —George, pseudonym;
> staff development day as professional development

Provide Time to Discuss, Share, and Engage in Reflection

Effective professional development requires time for participants to discuss, share, and reflect. Whether professional development is interactive or conducted through lecture, without the opportunity to talk about their learning, the impact of the professional development experience on participants may be lessened. Teacher sharing is also important in professional development. Some of the most powerful learning is achieved through teachers sharing ideas, strategies, and solutions with their peers.

For professional development to have lasting impact on teachers' practice, participants must engage in reflection. Reflection may be done individually or collaboratively. When teachers gain knowledge without engaging in purposeful reflection, the likelihood that this knowledge is integrated into their practice is decreased. "An essential ingredient for effective staff development is time for professionals to reflect on their experiences" (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997, p. 151). Teachers need multiple and ongoing opportunities to think about their learning and development, to make connections to their learning and their classrooms or schools, and to question themselves and their practice. If teachers are to improve practice and, as a result, improve student learning, reflective learning communities in schools are critical (Bambino, 2002).

Teachers can engage in reflection on their professional development experiences in several ways. Reflections can be written or verbalized, conducted "on the spot" or after an extended period of reflection. Examples of written reflections may include journal writing, questionnaires, and surveys. Dialogue can also be a form of reflection. Whether reflection is formal or spontaneous, its purpose is to determine what was learned during the professional development experience and in what ways the content of the professional development connects to the classroom.

Document Professional Development Experiences

When educators engage in professional development, it is important to document their participation for several reasons. One logical reason is for continued certification. Most teachers are required to complete a particular number of hours in professional development in a specified time period in order to be re-certified. Accurate documentation, usually in the form of traditional completion and mastery forms, is mandatory for teachers to retain their certification. Another reason to record professional development participation is to keep track of school expertise. Educators often participate in professional development without their colleagues' knowledge. Such participation is a perfect opportunity for teachers to share information from which their peers can profit. When it is common knowledge that professionals in the school have specific expertise, everyone may benefit. Documentation of professional development topic areas and hours is also advantageous when examining individual and school goals. By recording the topic, participation hours, and results of the professional development, school educators can determine whether they are meeting school goals (e.g., acquiring new teaching and learning strategies or improved test scores).

Creating a reward structure based on professional development is also a rationale for documentation. While re-certification is motivation for completing a specified number of professional development hours, it does not acknowledge the educators who believe in life-long learning. Many teachers and administrators accumulate many more hours of professional development than are required for licensure. They engage in professional experiences simply for the love of learning and improving their practice. For those professionals, there should be a reward system that acknowledges their participation and reflection. National Board Certification is one example of compensation for devotion to life-long learning, but its prescribed course of action excludes some educators who participate in multiple in-services, attend and present at conferences, and enroll in graduate courses, but choose not to become board certified.

One of the best ways to document any participation in and resultant learning from professional development is the creation of a portfolio. A teaching portfolio is a collection of student and teacher artifacts compiled for the purpose of improving instruction. Because a teaching portfolio is an excellent way to evaluate and reflect on one's own teaching, it serves as a powerful way to document professional development. A teaching portfolio may include educational philosophy, teacher and student work, case studies of students, action research data, and reflective essays. Through the selection and examination of these artifacts, teachers can identify strengths and weaknesses and assess both student and teacher progress.

Evaluate Professional Development Activities

To ensure the effectiveness of professional development, evaluation is a must. Evaluation helps to establish a clear link between professional development and student learning. Whether formal or informal, participants must take time to assess the impact of professional development experiences. Too often, educators complete professional learning without analyzing its effectiveness. "Learning becomes so embedded in our lives that we forget to recognize it *is* learning and therefore don't look critically at what and how much we *are* learning (Maute, 2003, p. 11). Purposeful evaluation can ensure that meaningful professional experiences are replicated, and insignificant ones are discontinued.

There are several ways to evaluate the efficacy of professional development. For example, participants may complete formal assessments at the completion of the experience. Responses could then be compiled and analyzed to determine the impact of the professional development. Another way that participants may evaluate professional development opportunities is through *Inspiration* computer software. *Inspiration* is a computer program that allows the user to organize thoughts and ideas into graphic representations. Participants may use the software to document how, when, where, and why activities will be linked to practice that results in improved student learning. These illustrative depictions can aid teachers and administrators in determining which professional development experiences are among the most effective.

> *I like that the presenters demonstrate democratic learning activities for us; they showed enthusiasm and knowledge about the information presented. The teacher involvement gave ownership to the group. The session on consensus building was great! I liked the group sharing and discussion. It is always nice to work collaboratively.*
>
> —Frances, pseudonym;
> multi-school/multi-year collaborative as professional development

> *I wanted to send you personal thanks for conducting a class that set the example for us all. I believe that the best learning takes place when the student enjoys the class, is relaxed, and laughs a lot. We did that. You reminded us all that good teachers understand the importance of people—after all, that's what teaching is all about.*
>
> —Frank, pseudonym;
> graduate school education as professional development

BENEFITS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ABOUT EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter we shared the voices of middle school teachers reflecting upon their professional development activities. All the teachers indicated their professional development experiences deepened their knowledge and skills. The professional development occurred in a variety of ways, sometimes individually, but most often within a community of learners. In addition, in each instance, the professional development was relevant, focused, and embedded in work; held in a supportive context with adequate time; was collegial and collaborative; and finally, empowering.

The professional development experiences for these middle school teachers were effective because the teachers took action as a result of their new learning. Emily (learning expedition as professional development) and her teammates used their new knowledge about ecology to co-develop science service learning projects with their students. Ariana (conference as professional development), as the school-wide art teacher, collaborated with her colleagues on thematic unit construction. Suzanne (graduate school education as professional development) changed her entire curriculum for a culturally diverse group of students from teacher-centered to one focused on meeting the needs of students while engaging them in meaningful learning. Angie (teacher group as professional development) used her CFG dialogues to help her re-examine her assessment practices in her eighth grade social studies classroom. Patricia's (individual on-going learning as professional development) philosophy of teaching and learning changed across time to reflect her new understanding of the purposes of schooling. As she became more empowered so did her students. Laura (action research as professional development), as a result of questioning interdisciplinary teaming practices, learned more about her colleagues and how to effectively collaborate within and across teams. Krista (teaming as professional development) also became empowered. As a result, she made changes in the curriculum and the learning environment in her classroom.

Implementation of new and creative teaching techniques was the result of attending a conference (as professional development) for Reston. Nancy (school-wide/multi-year effort as professional development) and her colleagues, as a learning community, changed the entire school philosophy from one resembling a junior high to one embracing the middle school concept. According to Joan, her leadership role (as professional development) enabled her to develop a variety of curriculum and implement innovative instructional strategies. As a result of becoming more knowledgeable about curricular and instructional alternatives, assessment, learning styles, and adolescent development, Kate (teaching experience as professional development) created a democratic learning environment in her classroom.

David (week-long workshop as professional development) decided to use project work more in his own classroom. As a result of learning more about the goings-on in his school from his colleagues, George (staff development day as professional development) now incorporates reading instruction into his science lessons. Frances (multi-school/multi-year collaborative as professional development), rather than having students vote on topics, now uses consensus-building strategies. For Frank (graduate school education as professional development), a teacher who already had a great rapport with his students, his professional development experience reaffirmed what he had known all along: Good teachers understand the importance of knowing their students.

These teachers benefited from their professional development experiences. For these teachers, and others involved in effective professional development, the benefits included:

- renewed enthusiasm for teaching which led to changes in their classrooms;
- refined philosophies of teaching and learning;
- new insights into young adolescence (needs, interests, concerns, diversity);
- enhanced ability to meet the needs of students (cognitive, social, emotional, physical, moral); and
- increased knowledge of content and ways to teach.

Ultimately, they became more empowered, dedicated, reflective, and effective teachers—teachers making a difference in the lives of their students.

A final thought about professional development and what makes it effective—we must keep in mind what we know about middle school teachers. Teachers are very much like their middle school students. Middle school teachers and middle school students are knowledgeable, spontaneous, inquisitive, fun loving, and have serious thoughts, questions, and concerns. Middle school teachers want to make a difference in the lives of their students, just as middle school students want to make a difference in their world. Just as teachers keep in mind what they know about their students as they develop curriculum, instruction, and assessment, so must we keep in mind both the characteristics of middle school teachers as adult learners and what makes professional development experiences effective.

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CHAPTER 7

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MIDDLE GRADES TEACHERS

Does One Size Fit All?

Nancy Flowers and Steven B. Mertens
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

Teacher pre-service training and preparation, certification and licensure, and ongoing career-long professional development are critically important components in ensuring that America's middle grades schools are staffed with highly qualified teachers. These components are particularly at issue for middle level schools where the majority of teachers do not have the types of specialized middle grades teaching certification and licensure necessary to specifically address the academic and developmental needs of young adolescents. Professional development is seen as a way to provide teachers with the knowledge and skills they did not gain in pre-service education. Unfortunately, the frequency and depth of most professional development currently provided to classroom teachers falls well short of meeting their needs. This study examines the professional development activities and needs of middle

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grades teachers in Arkansas, Louisiana, Michigan, and Mississippi. It discusses why the "one size fits all" approach to professional development is problematic and also stresses the importance of examining professional development needs from differing perspectives (e.g., administrator vs. teacher). Additionally, it recommends that professional development data, like student achievement data, can and should be disaggregated to provide more detailed information about the varying needs of sub-groups of teachers (e.g., certification type, years of experience).

INTRODUCTION

Teacher pre-service training and preparation, certification and licensure, and ongoing career-long professional development are critically important components in ensuring that America's middle grades schools are staffed with highly qualified teachers. However, policy makers often focus on only one or two of these components individually rather than comprehending that, as a group, these areas are all interrelated in the development of highly qualified teachers. This dilemma is particularly troubling for middle grades schools because of the lack of specialized middle grades teacher preparation and the persistent problem of middle grades certification and licensure overlapping grade levels with both elementary and high schools.

Professional development for classroom teachers is often cited as a way to provide teachers with the knowledge and skills they may not have obtained in pre-service education. Unfortunately, the frequency and depth of most professional development currently provided to classroom teachers falls well short of meeting their needs. What is desperately needed is a new approach to professional development. For example, Sparks and Hirsh (1997) describe an approach that shifts the focus of professional development from the district to the school level, from fragmented efforts to comprehensive plans, from adult needs to student needs, from off-site training to job-embedded training, and from generic skills to a combination that includes content-specific skills.

Experts in the field of middle level education recommend that middle grades schools be staffed with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000; McEwin & Dickinson, 1995). Further support and advocacy for middle grades teacher preparation programs and specialized teacher training come from numerous professional organizations (National Middle School Association, 1991; Cooney, 2000; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002). Unfortunately, most middle grades teachers do not receive specialized training as part of their pre-service education and certification (McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 1996; Scales, 1992; Scales & McEwin, 1994). In many states, such training and certification is simply not available. As described in further detail below, this study examined data from over 8,300 teachers in 294 middle grades schools located in Arkansas, Louisiana, Michigan, and Mississippi. Only 9% of the teachers in this research sample have a middle grades certification. The majority of teachers in these middle level schools have an elementary certification (51%). An additional 47% have a secondary certification. Clearly, we cannot assume that teachers in middle grades schools have received specialized training and certification in middle level practices (Gaskill, 2002). Thus, much of the specialized training of middle grades teachers occurs on site, within schools, and in conjunction with a school's improvement goals.

Staff development experts agree that professional development should be ongoing, outcome based, and foster continuous improvement (Hirsh, 2000; Guskey, 2000). The National Staff Development Council argues that professional development is an essential element in student achievement (Killion, 1999). Numerous studies have cited the critical importance of ongoing and meaningful professional development, particularly for teachers in the middle grades (Darling-Hammond, 1997; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, 2003).

The Southern Regional Education Board recently published a study focused on highly qualified teachers in middle grades classrooms including an analysis of professional development (Cooney & Bottoms, 2003). One of their findings was that, from 2000 to 2002, slightly fewer teachers reported needing help with teaching skills, but significant percentages still report professional development needs in working with at-risk students, engaging students in learning, and deepening their own knowledge in content areas. Overall, teachers reported positive feelings about their professional development experiences. However, the percentage of teachers who receive ongoing professional development is relatively small. Cooney and Bottoms (2003) recommend that school and/or district professional development plans should include:

- support for new teachers through a well-designed induction and mentoring process;
- ways to upgrade content knowledge for those who are teaching outside their subject area and those who need to update their subject knowledge; and
- opportunities for all teachers to hone their teaching skills by emphasizing practices that improve student achievement. (p. 12)

Other important studies about teacher professional development have examined teachers' attitudes about the benefits and application of training experiences. For example, in 2000 the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) conducted a national survey of over 5,200 teachers in public elementary, middle, and high schools focusing on teacher preparation and professional development. Teachers were most likely to have participated in professional development that focused on state or district curriculum and performance standards (80%). The survey also revealed that the number of hours teachers spent in professional development activities was related to the extent to which they believed that participation improved their teaching. For example, if teachers spent more than eight hours in professional development, they were more likely to report that the activity improved their teaching. Finally, teachers' assessment of professional development's impact on teaching was related to the extent to which they felt that their professional development was linked to other program activities at their school. These results are comparable to those found in a similar survey conducted by NCES in 1998 (Choy & Chen, 1998). Finally, in the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) from 1999–2000 found that only slightly more than 40% of full-time teachers reported participating in professional development activities that focused on in-depth study of content in their main teaching field in the last 12 months (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

Finally, in a study focusing on the link between teacher classroom practices and student academic performance, Wenglinsky (2002) found two important findings related to professional development. First, professional development seems to strongly influence teachers' classroom practices. Second, while most teachers receive some professional development, it is generally not for long durations, certain topics are overlooked completely, and, regardless of the topic of professional development, only a minority of teachers have received more than 15 hours of professional development a year.

A recent synopsis of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) points out that a major component of this significant legislation is the opportunity to improve the quality of teaching and professional development in high poverty and academically low achieving middle grades schools (Brown, 2002). NCLB defines professional development as "high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom" and "not 1-day or short-term workshops or conferences" (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002, p. 1963) The inference is that NCLB is referring to intensive, ongoing, and substantive professional development opportunities for high poverty and struggling middle grades schools.

This chapter will focus on the professional development activities and needs of middle grades teachers in four states. It will discuss current professional development activities, as well as areas where teachers indicate they need additional professional development and/or training. We will also discuss the value of disaggregating professional development data to truly address the needs of all groups of teachers within a school. Individual examples will be cited to provide a clearer understanding of the value of disaggregating professional development data.

DATA AND METHODS

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through the School Improvement Self-Study, developed and conducted by the Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois. The Self-Study is a data collection system consisting of a set of survey measures, including teacher, student, administrator, and parent surveys. The Self-Study teacher survey, highlighted in this study, examines several different areas of middle grades school improvement including attitudes toward middle grades' educational practices, parent contact and involvement, classroom and interdisciplinary team practices, school and classroom climate, and professional development activities and needs. Although the teacher survey is anonymous, teachers are asked to supply basic descriptive information (e.g., subject areas and grade levels taught, type of teacher certification, types and length of teaching experience).

The Self-Study's intended design and purpose are twofold. First, the Self-Study provides middle grades schools with quantitative data to document and track the changes in their schools as part of existing school improvement plans. It provides schools with a way of establishing dialogue about school improvement, setting priorities, determining goals, and most importantly, assessing and measuring the outcomes of new programs and practices. Second, the Self-Study provides data at an aggregate level (e.g., district, region, state) that enables both cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses of multiple schools. At an aggregate level, the Self-Study is particularly beneficial in strategic planning, identifying areas of focused improvement, providing an overall needs assessment, and informing the development of district or state-level educational policy with the outcome of improved teaching and learning for young adolescents.

Study Sample

In 1994, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation launched the Michigan Middle Start Initiative. Its purpose was to promote and improve middle grades education for all of Michigan's young adolescents and sustain increased achievement and developmental responsiveness over time (Lewis, 2000). In 1998, with funding from the Kellogg Foundation, the Foundation for the Mid South began the Mid South Middle Start Initiative in three mid south states: Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Michigan and Mid South Middle Start provided numerous opportunities for schools including grant funding, professional development, and networking. Because of the importance placed on data-based decision making at both the individual school level and the initiative level, Middle Start schools are required to participate in the CPRD Self-Study.

The data for this study are derived from a sample of over 8,300 teachers in 294 middle grades schools that participated in the Self-Study as part of the Middle Start initiative in Arkansas, Louisiana, Michigan, and Mississippi during the 2000/01 school year (Table 7.1). These schools received a diverse range of services from the Middle Start initiatives, ranging from only completing the Self-Study to participating in ongoing professional development and technical assistance. For this analysis of teacher professional development, it is possible to examine the research sample in two ways. First, we can examine the data at the individual teacher level, in which case our sample is comprised of 8,371 teachers. Second, we can aggregate the staff professional development data at the school level, in which case our sample is comprised of 294 schools. The differences between individual teacher data and school-level aggregate data are usually minimal.

Table 7.1. Sample Description

	Teachers		*Schools*	
	N	%	*N*	%
Location				
Arkansas	1,568	19	59	20
Louisiana	1,547	19	51	17
Michigan	3,714	44	134	46
Mississippi	1,542	18	50	17
Totals	**8,371**	**100**	**294**	**100**
Certification type[a]				
Elementary	4,233	51	—	—
Middle grades	752	9	—	—
Secondary	3,900	47	—	—
Teaching experience				
5 years or less	1,896	24	—	—
6–15 years	2,425	31	—	—
More than 15 years	3,563	45	—	—

[a] Percentages do not total 100% because teachers can select more than one type of certification

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MEASURES FOR ASSESSING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

The Self-Study teacher survey measures two important aspects of teacher professional development. The first is how often teachers participate in professional development activities, either formal or informal, over the course of the school year. The second area of teacher professional development measured by the survey is the content area in which teachers feel they need additional professional development training. It is important to note that when teachers answer these questions, they are not speculating on the overall participation and needs of all teachers in their school, but rather they answer these questions by reflecting on their individual professional development experiences and needs.

The first set of teacher survey questions asks about how often teachers have participated in various types of professional development activities during the school year (see Appendix A). The experiences they reflect on include district supported activities (e.g., workshops/in-services provided through the school district); school-wide activities (e.g., exchanging resources/lesson plans with teachers in your school); grade-level or team-level sponsored activities (e.g., staff development activities within your team); regional or national activities (e.g., workshops/in-services provided through the state educational agency); and extended experiences (e.g., formal course work). The response metric for these questions ranges from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*daily*).

The second set of questions about professional development can be considered a needs assessment because it asks teachers to indicate in what areas they need additional knowledge and training (see Appendix B). The needs that are asked about include a wide range of professional development opportunities including classroom instructional practices (e.g., cooperative/small group teaching practices); tailoring instruction and learning to student needs (e.g., tailoring instruction to learning styles); working with communities and families (e.g., working with families to involve them in education); content-based curriculum and instruction (e.g., reading skill development); and school-wide organization and functioning (e.g., interdisciplinary teaming). Teachers are asked to indicate how much additional professional development they feel they need in each area. The response metric for these questions ranges from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*very much*).

When these data are presented back to a school that has participated in the Self-Study, they are displayed in a table where the individual professional development questions are rank ordered from highest to lowest. In this way, school personnel can easily ascertain the most frequent type of training their teachers are participating in as well as the areas in which teachers need the most additional training.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Professional Development Findings

In analyzing the professional development data from the Middle Start schools, we discovered several interesting findings. First, when we examined the levels or rates of participation, we found that teachers' rankings of their top five professional development activities were predominantly activities occurring within their school (Table 7.2). Teachers report participating in these activities, on average, *several times a year* (mean scores range from 2.86 to 3.34). In contrast, professional development activities outside the school (e.g., exchanging lesson plans with teachers in other schools, visits to other schools, teacher exchanges with other schools) occur much less frequently.

Table 7.2. Top Five Professional Development Activities

	Rank	*Mean*	*N*
Exchanging resources/lesson plans with teachers in your school	1	3.34	7,874
Workshops/in-services provided through the school district	2	3.07	7,952
Staff development activities within your grade level	3	2.99	7,725
Workshops/in-services provided by staff in your school	4	2.98	7,933
Staff development activities within your team	5	2.86	7,587

Note: Response metric for participation in professional development activities ranges from 1 to 7 with (1) Never, (2) Once a year, (3) Several times a year, (4) Quarterly, (5) Monthly, (6) Weekly, and (7) Daily.

Second, the overall rates of teacher participation in professional development are relatively low. The most frequent type of professional development was *exchanging resources/lesson plans with teachers in your school*, reported as occurring slightly more than *several times a year* (3.34). The least frequent type of activity is *teacher exchanges with other schools*, occurring significantly less often (*less than once a year* or 1.32). On average, teachers report engaging in only four professional development activities *several times a year*, and all occur within their school or district providing minimal, if any, opportunity for professional development opportunities outside their very own school. Opportunities to visit other classrooms within their own school only occur between *yearly* and *several times a year* (2.46).

Next we examined professional development needs as reported by middle grades teachers. These findings, like those for the frequency of participation in professional development, are quite similar to what we have observed in collecting data from thousands of middle grades schools involved in Middle Start since 1995. The rankings of the top five additional professional development needs are listed in Table 7.3. The most requested professional development activity is *using computers as part of instruction* at slightly more than a *moderate amount* (3.23). Teachers indicated that a *moderate amount* of additional development was needed for nearly all of the top five most requested activities. The least requested activity was *identifying and referring students in need of health and social services* at between a *little* and a *moderate amount* of additional training (2.51).

In working with middle grades schools for over a decade, we have observed two patterns in professional development needs that typically emerge. Schools will either rank a few items as very high, indicating that they need significantly more professional development in those areas, or they will indicate a moderate need for many professional development activities. Overall, in this sample we find that teachers indicate they need some or a moderate amount of professional development in several areas, not just a few. There is not a tremendous amount of variation between the highest ranked need and the lowest ranked need—teachers feel they need some additional training in nearly all the areas listed in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3. Top Five Additional Professional Development Needs

	Rank	*Mean*	*N*
Using computers as part of instruction	1	3.23	7,846
Strategies for teaching broad range ability levels in the same classroom	2	3.13	7,824
Working with "at-risk" students	3	3.04	7,860
Working with families to involve them in education	4	2.95	7,837
Active, "hands-on" learning	5	2.92	7,844
Involving community resources and settings in education	5	2.92	7,831

Note: Response metric for additional professional development needs ranges from 1 to 5 with (1) None, (2) Little (e.g., single workshop, inservice), (3) Moderate amount, (4) Much, (5) Very much (e.g., extended coursework, staff development experiences)

Disaggregating Professional Development Data

In assisting individual schools in interpreting the results of their professional development findings, we strongly encourage them to consider disaggregating their results. Initially, schools are somewhat confused by the notion of disaggregating professional development results. This is generally the case because professional development is not usually seen as targeting sub-groups of teachers, but rather all teachers within a school. Is this "one size fits all" approach meaningful in middle grades professional development? We think it depends on the composition, experience, and expertise of the school's teaching staff. For example, if half of the school's staff is comprised of relatively new teachers, (less than five years of teaching experience, for example) and the other half is comprised of experienced teachers with over 15 years of teaching experience, would the professional development needs of these two groups of teachers be the same? If their needs are not the same, then why would a school, or a school district, opt for a "one size fits all" professional development activity?

Schools and school districts are now being held more accountable. They are required to disaggregate and report their student achievement data by various sub-groups of students (e.g., ethnicity, lunch status, disability) in order to better address and meet the needs of all students. We believe this approach of disaggregating data at the sub-group level to be beneficial in determining the best types of professional development for all teachers. We have observed numerous situations in which schools have begun to disaggregate their professional development data and found unexpected results. Rather than take the time to describe all possible permutations of disaggregating professional development data, we would prefer to illustrate our point by providing a few pertinent examples.

Do Teachers and Administrators Have Similar Views of Professional Development?

A very interesting finding emerges when we compare the opinions of administrators regarding what additional professional development they believe the teachers in their schools need to the specified needs of the teachers themselves. The Self-Study administrator survey gathers data about teacher professional development, but from a different perspective than the teacher survey. Whereas the teacher survey asks teachers to indicate what additional professional development they feel they each individually need, the administrators are asked what additional professional development they believe their teachers need overall. And since administrators are key decision makers in developing the professional development calendar of events offered to teachers annually, this is a key piece of data.

A related CPRD study compared the responses of teachers to the responses of administrators on Self-Study professional development questions (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2002). The study found that the areas teachers indicate as their highest priorities for additional professional development (between a *moderate amount* and *much more needed*) are all related to classroom instructional practices and tailoring instruction and learning to student needs (e.g., using computers as part of instruction, strategies for teaching a broad range of abilities in the same classroom, working with at-risk students). The study found that administrators, on the other hand, identified broader school issues as the highest priorities for additional training for teachers (e.g., peer coaching, teacher-led advisory, data-based decision making). Clearly the diverse roles and responsibilities of administrators and teachers are reflected in these findings. While a teacher's focus is primarily on the teaching and learning process within his or her classroom, the administrator's focus is often from a larger school improvement perspective. These findings imply that both parties should have input into the decisions regarding teacher professional development.

Professional Development and Teacher Certification

One way for a school to examine its professional development needs is to assess what if any differences exist by type of teacher certification. This is particularly important for middle grades schools where teachers in any given school may have an elementary, middle grades, or secondary teaching certification. We have found that most middle grades schools have some combination of all three, or at least a combination of elementary and secondary certified teachers (Mertens, Flowers, & Mulhall, 2002). When these schools disaggregate their professional development data by certification type, they usually find noticeable differences in the areas in which teachers indicate they need additional professional development. For example, in many schools reading skill development is ranked more highly as a development need for secondary certified teachers as compared to elementary certified teachers. In addition, active, "hands-on" learning is a professional development skill that is usually rated as a higher need for secondary certified teachers than for elementary certified teachers. Alternatively, the integration of mathematical concepts as a professional development need is usually much higher for elementary certified teachers as compared to secondary certified teachers.

Professional Development and Teaching Experience

An additional way for schools to examine their professional development data is by their staff members' varying amounts of teaching experience (see Table 7.1). Most schools employ teachers with varying levels of teaching experience. The newer teachers (e.g., less than five years of teaching experience) may have very different professional development needs than the more experienced teachers (e.g., 15 years or more of teaching experience). An examination of the teachers in this study's sample reveals an interesting difference in professional development needs by teaching experience. First, as you might predict, teachers with less than five years experience indicate a higher need for all professional development activities than teachers with 15 years or more teaching experience. While teachers with less than five years of experience indicate a need for at least a *moderate amount* of additional professional development in 11 different areas, teachers with 15 years or more of experience express a need for a moderate amount of additional professional development in only three areas. The exception to this finding is that teachers with 15 years or more experience indicate a higher need, in comparison to newer teachers, for professional development related to using computers as part of instruction.

DISCUSSION

An examination of professional development in this sample of over 8,300 middle grades teachers uncovers several key implications for schools, districts, and policy makers. First, it is clear that teachers' rates of participation in professional development activities (at most, an average of several times a year) are relatively low. Although teachers participate most often in professional development activities within their own buildings, schools must further enhance these opportunities so that they are ongoing and seamlessly embedded in the weekly and daily school routine. Further, schools and districts must look for opportunities for teachers to participate in district, regional, and national activities in order to enhance and support the ongoing training that occurs within their schools and take into account state and national issues like standards. By both enhancing school-based professional development as well as building upon the school activities with enrichment from outside the building, schools will succeed in taking advantage of the less costly resources in their own backyards (i.e., within their own school or district) and are more likely to succeed in engaging in ongoing activities. In many ways, this approach of daily school-embedded professional development that is augmented by outside activities involves a mind shift so that administrators and teachers begin to view professional development in a different light. Sharing resources with teachers in your school, meeting with teachers to collaboratively review student work, observing the classrooms of one another, etc., are all examples of informal professional development that are not only valuable, but less costly and easier to engage in regularly. We believe that administrators and teachers need to begin to view this type of professional development as beneficial and powerful, particularly when it is the regular routine of the school and is linked to the overall school improvement goals.

One might surmise that the reason teachers participate in professional development activities infrequently is that they don't feel they need additional training. This conclusion, however, is refuted in this study. Teachers *do* indicate a high need for additional professional development activities. In fact, teachers indicate a need, on average, for a ***moderate amount*** of additional professional development in five specific areas related to working with students and families. In addition, there is a wide range of other activities that teachers indicate they need between a ***little*** and a ***moderate amount*** of additional professional development. Clearly, the second implication of our study is that participation in professional development only several times a year is not meeting the needs of teachers.

The third implication of this study seems obvious but cannot be understated. It is clear from this data that administrators and teachers have different perspectives on the types of professional development that teachers need. Thus, the implication is that the views of both the administration and the teaching staff must be considered when planning the professional development calendar. The data demonstrate that administrators identify the highest need for additional teacher professional development around broad school issues such as teacher-led advisory and data-based decision making. Teachers, on the other hand, indicate that their highest priorities for additional professional development are related to classroom instruction and working with students (e.g., using computers as part of instruction, strategies for teaching a broad range of abilities in the same classroom). Both perspectives are important and must be discussed and prioritized to best meet the needs of teachers as well as make progress toward meeting the school goals.

The fourth and final implication that emerges from an analysis of this data is that the "one size fits all" approach to professional development within a district or school is not effective. In other words, planning professional development opportunities for an entire district staff or school staff without considering the needs of sub-groups of teachers will not meet the needs of everyone and therefore will not be effective. This study demonstrates that teachers have different needs for professional development that relate to factors such as the amount of teaching experience they have and the type of certification they hold. For example, teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience tend to have greater needs for professional development than teachers with longer classroom experience. One possible solution to address this issue is to develop a mentoring program for new teachers. In the case of teaching certification, secondary certified teachers indicate a higher need for training related to classroom instructional strategies like *reading skill development* and *active, "hands-on" learning* than elementary certified teachers. We further assert that there are likely numerous other factors that impact professional development needs, and which are present within an individual district or school. Thus, districts and schools must consider their professional development needs at the sub-group level in order to understand the diverse needs of teachers. Clearly, all needs might not be met during one school year; however, a plan can certainly be implemented to meet the needs of all teachers over a two- to three-year period.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the relatively low levels of teacher participation in professional development activities. Teachers participate at most only *several times a year* (on average) in professional development. The data further demonstrate that teachers want more professional development in a multitude of areas related to the teaching and learning process. In fact, for the top five most requested professional development activities, teachers indicated they want an average of a *moderate amount* of additional training. If teachers want more training, but are not currently receiving it, we must consider how we define professional development, what professional development activities are valued, and the process by which districts and schools make decisions about the professional development opportunities offered to teachers.

We believe that a system of ongoing informal and formal professional development within the school must be valued and implemented. It should be further supported by district, state, and national efforts that lend perspective, take into account state and national standards, and spark new ideas. Professional development opportunities must also be designed considering the various perspectives of district personnel, school administrators, and teachers.

Finally, the "one size fits all" approach to determining and implementing professional development activities is neither sufficient nor effective. Districts and schools must approach professional development planning in the same way that they are now approaching student learning via the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002). By examining sub-groups of teachers within a district or school, professional development activities can be offered that meet the needs of all teachers within the context of the school's improvement goals.

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APPENDIX A
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY ITEMS: PARTICIPATION

District activities

- Visits to other schools
- Teacher exchanges with other schools
- Exchanging resources/lesson plans with teachers in other schools
- Workshops/in-services provided through the school district

School-wide activities

- Visits to other classrooms
- Peer coaching with other teachers
- Exchanging resources/lesson plans with teachers in your school
- Workshops/in-services provided by staff in your school

Team or grade level activities

- Staff development activities within your grade level
- Staff development activities within your team

Regional or national activities

- Workshops/in-services provided by a school reform association or network
- Workshops/in-services provided through the state educational agency
- Workshops focused on a specific school reform initiative/model

Extended activities

- Formal course work
- Extended institutes (e.g., multiple day, summer)

APPENDIX B
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY ITEMS: ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Classroom instructional practices

- Using computers as part of instruction
- Active, "hands-on" learning
- Cooperative learning and/or small group teaching practices
- Developmentally appropriate instructional methods
- Mastery learning techniques
- Alternative/authentic assessment practices
- Strategies for incorporating homework effectively into instruction
- Integrated curriculum and unit development
- Inquiry or problem-centered learning

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Tailoring instruction and learning to student needs

Developmental characteristics and needs of students

Identifying and referring students in need of health and social services

Tailoring instruction to student learning styles

Working with "at-risk" students

Strategies for teaching broad range ability levels in the same classroom

Student recognition practices and activities

Working with communities and families

Working with families to involve them in education

Service learning

Involving community resources and settings in education

Content-based curriculum and instruction

Reading skill development

Integration of mathematical concepts

Life and social skills development

Development of exploratory opportunities and experiences

School-wide organization and functioning

Teacher-led advisory

Interdisciplinary teaming

Data-based decision making

Peer coaching

Group decision making

Inclusion of special education students into regular classes

Multi-cultural education

Additional preparation in your primary content area

Communication skills

Teaching to standards in your subject areas

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CHAPTER 8

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION AS STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A Teacher's Perspective

Timothy M. Mullen
J.E. Richards Middle School and The University of Georgia

P. Gayle Andrews
The University of Georgia

ABSTRACT

This chapter represents a National Board certified teacher's perspective on how the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification process changes teachers in ways that traditional staff development does not. The process of developing a portfolio, documenting thought processes, analyzing student work samples, videotaping instruction methods, and completing written tests helps to develop teachers who are more reflective and accomplished in their teaching. The National Board certification process requires teachers to show that they are committed to students and

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Leaders for a Movement, pages 163–176
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their learning, know the subjects that they teach and how to teach those subjects, are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and are members of learning communities. National Board standards, developed by panels of experts in the various content specialties, are used to identify reflective and accomplished teachers. The process of seeking that identification, whether or not it results in National Board certification, provides professional development of a scope and complexity that traditional staff development cannot match.

INTRODUCTION

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (National Board or NBPTS) offers the National Board Certification as a symbol of professional teaching excellence. This certification complements, though it does not replace, state teaching licensure. The purpose of the certification is to identify accomplished teachers based on rigorous standards. The National Board certification process is a powerful tool for professional and personal development, whether teachers achieve certification or not. The changes that occur in teachers going through the National Board certification process are at least as important as the actual certification. The process requires candidates to reflect on themselves as teachers, including their classroom beliefs, practices, and the ways they interact with their students. The process changes the way teachers view teaching as a profession and the teacher's role in the profession's advancement. The National Board certification process changes teachers for life.

This chapter provides a description of the National Board certification process and shows how school systems can use the process to provide professional development that meets rigorous teaching standards. This process is not for everyone. Teachers seeking National Board certification must hold certain beliefs and motivations. This chapter outlines the perspective of a National Board certified middle grades teacher and National Board facilitator on how the National Board certification process positively affects teachers who accept the challenge and show that they are accomplished teachers as defined by the National Board's criteria.

BACKGROUND

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards originated in 1987 after the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession released *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (1986). A *Nation Prepared* responded to the 1983 publication, *A*

Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (National Commission on Excellence in Education). The 1983 report set off alarms that our nation's educational system was in a desperate state. Three years later, *A Nation Prepared* recommended that improvements be made in teacher preparation and professional development programs, changes that would be required to assure a better education for the nation's children. The Task Force's report "urged the teaching profession to set the standards and certify teachers who meet those standards and called for the formation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards" (NBPTS, 2003a).

The National Board is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and non-governmental organization that identifies and certifies teachers who are accomplished, that is, those who make sound professional judgments about student learning and act effectively on those judgments. To ensure that the certification is rigorous and identifies accomplished teachers who are able to meet the needs identified in *A Nation at Risk* (1983), the governing body of the National Board is comprised of 63 members, most of whom are teachers but also including school administrators, school board members, higher education specialists, business leaders, governors, legislators, and community leaders. The mission of the National Board (2003b) is to:

- establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet these standards; and
- advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in schools in the United States.

The National Board recognizes that not every teacher can fulfill its certification requirements but rather only those who set high expectations for both themselves and their students. The National Board envisions that its certified teachers will become the leaders of educational reform, becoming agents of change from within their schools. In developing the certification requirements to identify exemplary teachers, the National Board designed a structure of beliefs and standards for teachers to demonstrate in their teaching. The National Board's Core Propositions form the guiding belief statement of the organization and have guided the development of the NBPTS teaching standards and the certification process.

Core Propositions

Before starting the National Board certification process, teachers must understand and accept the five core propositions. Those propositions, developed by teachers and professional organizations, provide shared beliefs that accomplished teachers are expected to demonstrate in their teaching (NBPTS, 2003c).

Teachers are Committed to Students and their Learning

Accomplished teachers act on the belief that all students can learn, and they make a difference in each child's learning. They consider each child in their teaching and adjust their teaching as conditions change day-to-day and year-to-year. In addition to academic instruction, accomplished teachers help children develop socially into responsible and motivated adults. They include lessons and model desired characteristics such as civic responsibility, motivation, and respect for themselves and each other.

Teachers Know the Subjects that They Teach and How to Teach those Subjects

Accomplished teachers are aware of their students' preconceptions toward the subject matter being taught and possess the pedagogical skills needed to convey relevant knowledge. Accomplished teachers use developmentally appropriate methods in their instruction, thus allowing them to create multiple instructional paths to meet the varied needs of their students.

Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning

Accomplished teachers command a wide range of instructional methods to create and maintain a learning environment that is best for their students. They ensure a disciplined learning environment that supports and encourages instruction and student behaviors favorable to learning. They understand how to motivate students and use multiple methods for evaluation that consider the many needs of their students. There are no excuses; accomplished teachers accept that the student learning and the behavior that occur in their classroom are their responsibility.

Teachers Think Systematically about their Practice and Learn from Experience

"Accomplished teachers are models of educated persons, exemplifying the virtues they seek to inspire in students—curiosity, tolerance, fairness, respect for diversity and appreciation of cultural differences—and the capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth" (NBPTS, 2003c). When developing instruction, they draw on their knowledge of human development, academic content, and their understanding of their students. They seek to instill a desire for life-long learning in their students by creating meaningful and relevant instruction.

Teachers are Members of Learning Communities

Accomplished teachers work collaboratively with their colleagues, parents, and community members to improve teaching and learning. They understand the workings of schools and curricular requirements and are active participants in creating materials and methods to help meet the needs of the schools and mandated curriculum requirements. They use formal and informal partnerships with parents to engage parents in their children's education and social development. And, they engage the community as both support and resource for students' learning and their own enhanced understanding of their students' lives beyond the walls of the school.

Certificate Areas

The National Board currently offers certification for art, career and technical education, English as a new language, English language arts, exceptional needs, generalist, health, library media, mathematics, music, physical education, school counseling, science, social studies, and world languages other than English. Additional certificate areas are being developed as needed. Recognizing that students require a wide range of developmentally appropriate methods of teaching, the National Board further divided many of the certificate areas into age appropriate divisions:

- Early childhood (ages 3–8)
- Middle Childhood (ages 7–12)
- Early Adolescence (ages 11–15)
- Adolescence/Young Adult (ages 14–18+)

The Standards

The National Board standards for each of their teaching certificates provide a consistent format and set of expectations across all fields and specialties. This consistency across certificates allows teachers seeking National Board certification the opportunity to establish that they are accomplished teachers using a coherent and uniform set of standards. The National Board did not develop its standards in isolation. Instead, the National Board developed its standards by involving the various national teaching organizations that broadly represent their fields (e.g., National Science Teacher Association, National Council for Teachers of Mathematics) and expert panels. The panels included teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and experts in child development.

In addition to the content specific standards that show whether teachers are experts in their subject areas, the National Board also established several standards common to all certificate areas to show how the educators consider student needs and capabilities in their planning and instruction. Those common standards are described in more detail in the following sections.

Knowledge of Students

The *Knowledge of Students* standard is included in all certificate areas and requires teachers to show that they understand their students as individuals. By understanding the various challenges of diverse student populations, a teacher can develop differentiated instruction that meets the needs of each student. Teachers also modify instruction based on their understanding of how each student reacts in a classroom with other students. The *Knowledge of Students* standard does not define right, or wrong, ways for teachers to deliver instruction; rather the National Board certification process forces teachers to identify the variables and factors they use when designing instruction and to explain their thought processes. The National Board also recognizes that teachers are not always successful when teaching lessons. Accomplished teachers learn from classroom experiences and modify their lessons as needed while they are teaching and when planning for the next time so that lessons better meet instructional goals.

Equitable Participation

The *Equitable Participation* standard requires all teachers to be sensitive to the needs of every student in the classroom. By understanding the personalities, cultural or ethnic backgrounds, and gender differences of their students, accomplished teachers can better assure that all students have an equitable opportunity to learn. Participation, for example, does not necessarily refer to students raising their hands and asking questions. Students have varying needs and participate in different ways. For one student, eye contact with the teacher is enough to ensure that the student is participating in an engaging way that challenges the child to learn. Another child might need encouragement to raise his or her hand and ask questions. The National Board does not dictate how teachers are to assure equitable participation only that they include this consideration for all students when planning, implementing, and reflecting on their teaching.

COLLABORATION WITH COLLEAGUES

Another standard that teachers must demonstrate to attain certification is *Collaboration with Colleagues*. For the good of the profession and the students, accomplished teachers cannot be isolated in the classroom. They often must leave their rooms to learn new content and the methods for teaching it. They must engage with their colleagues, the administration, the community, and parents so that they might learn more about themselves and those around them.

Accomplished teachers are active and involved. The National Board does not have formulas or set requirements as to how much teachers must do in the school and the community, such as participation in local education reform issues or how the teachers involve themselves in curriculum initiatives. Instead, the National Board recognizes that personal growth and professional growth are intertwined; that all teachers have specific interests, talents, and needs; and that meeting individual needs is vital to teachers' personal and professional development. However, teachers must show how each of their activities, organizational memberships, committee appointments, or community initiatives impacts their students' learning. Making the connections between student learning and their own activities and responsibilities helps teachers understand why they are engaged in collaboration and enables them to make decisions about future commitments of their time and energies. Accomplished teachers attend classes, conferences, and committee meetings because they know these activities are good for the school, themselves, or the students. Nationally Board certified teachers must keep the students at the forefront of their activities.

Family and Community Partnerships

Teachers must be proactive in developing partnerships with the parents of their students and the local community. Accomplished teachers are receptive, welcoming, and committed to establishing two-way communication with families. From this communication, the teacher seeks information about the student's strengths, interests, preferences, aspirations, and home life (NBPTS, 1998, p. 47). Parents and adult caregivers are allies of the accomplished teacher. From a continuing dialogue about students' growth and their changing needs, accomplished teachers learn how best to modify instruction in support of each student's learning.

The Process

The certification process consists of ten sections divided between two parts, portfolio and written tests. The portfolio portion focuses on showing the teacher in action. Candidates must show what they teach and how they teach it, as well as reflect on the process used. The portfolio includes four of the ten sections, but the Board attributes 60% of the total score to the portfolio, reflecting the importance of showing the teacher in action. Whereas the portfolio entries assess teaching practice, the written tests assess teacher knowledge of content and teaching methods. The six written tests account for 40% of the total score.

The portfolio does not require teachers to make up new lessons for the National Board. In fact, it may be better for teachers to use previously prepared units and expound on the details, describing their thoughts and rationale for the structure and implementation methods used in the lesson. The written portfolio sections set apart the accomplished teachers who plan units and lessons in which the students' needs are the focus of their instruction. The National Board's certification process provides a mechanism by which teachers who intuitively knew that certain lessons worked for student learning now are better able to understand why those lessons succeeded.

The portfolio requires teachers to show and explain their teaching methods, styles, and thinking. For most certificate areas, one section requires teachers to show how they design units in their content area, identifying goals based on content (*knowledge of content standard*) and the needs of their students (*knowledge of students standard*). Teachers must also explain their sequencing (*designing instruction standard*). To show the effectiveness of their instruction, teachers choose lessons from within the unit and provide details about their reasoning and methods. Work samples for selected students are also included to show student progress through the lessons. Teachers analyze the student work and explain how the student performance relates to the instructional methods. The process also requires the teachers to look at how they work in unison with each student and explain how they affect student learning. Reflecting on why things worked, or did not, is crucial to the process. Whether the teacher was a success with the student is not as important as his or her reflection about delivery of the lessons and determining what worked, what did not work, and why.

Two other entries for most certificate areas require teachers to videotape a class, showing interactions and management. Interactions include those from teacher to students, students to teacher, and student to student. Management includes student behaviors and management of instruction. Each interaction shows important traits concerning the atmosphere established in the class, including whether participation is equitable and how teachers present information. The National Board assessors do not look for perfectly behaved students and beautifully decorated classrooms. The assessors instead look at how teachers interact with the students and how they explain procedures and processes to various students. Assessors pay attention to how teachers explain a concept, how the students react, and how teachers describe in their portfolios why the students did or did not understand the lesson. When a student does not understand, teachers then must explain how they helped the student grasp the content or process knowledge that the student did not initially comprehend. Teachers constantly "think on their feet" as they teach and interact with students. The National Board wants to see teachers teaching and then reflecting about *why* they do *what* they do with their students. Implicit in the Board's assessment is the assumption that teachers typically learn from the process of teaching and that they will improve their decisions and practice when confronted with similar situations in the future. Being accomplished teachers also means that teachers not only understand what has gone badly, but also why other facets worked well.

The final section of the portfolio, "Documented Accomplishments," requires teachers to describe their accomplishments in collaborating with colleagues and building family and community partnerships. Teachers describe committees, conferences, and professional development experiences in which they took part. More importantly, the teachers must describe how each activity impacted the learning of their students. The National Board wants teachers to think about why they participate in various professional development activities and to relate their involvement in those experiences to their students' learning. Accomplished teachers demonstrate a purpose for the professional development in which they participate, and that purpose always includes meeting their students' learning needs.

The portfolio's Documented Accomplishments section also requires the teachers to demonstrate what they do to develop relationships with the families and guardians of students and how each relationship or activity benefits the students. Accomplished teachers understand the importance of these relationships for themselves and their students.

Once teachers complete and submit the portfolio, teachers seeking certification must take six written tests (40% of score). Testing centers throughout the country offer the tests, which are taken on an interactive computer terminal. Each test is thirty minutes long and assesses the teachers' knowledge of content area and methods of teaching. The tests are very different for each certificate areas but generally question teachers in order to assess their content expertise. The tests also provide classroom scenarios, and teachers' responses to those scenarios are assessed as a demonstration of their competency.

How the Process Changes Teachers

The process of National Board certification changes the teachers who attempt it. Although research on the impact of the National Board certification process is minimal, several teachers who have been through the process say that it changes the way they look at their students, content area, and involvement in activities. The National Board is making a concerted effort to organize and fund research that investigates how teachers change and how student learning is affected by teachers who are National Board certified; however, research efforts are in the early stages. The descriptions provided in this section are personal perceptions of how teachers changed after completing the process of National Board certification.

Teachers who complete the National Board certification process have analyzed themselves, their students, teaching, and involvements as they have never done previously. Those who are successful in attaining National Board certification are recognized, rewarded, and energized. They also frequently develop into teachers who serve as facilitators for other teachers going through the National Board process. National Board certified teachers give a measure of teacher quality to their school districts (Charlotte Collaborative, 2001, p. 4). In times of educational reform, systems and schools are trying new teaching models, often "packaged, one-size-fits-all" models, in an effort to improve student achievement. Nationally certified teachers not only do what their systems expect from them in delivering mandated curricula in keeping with reform efforts, but they also go beyond the expected to ensure that what they do is best for their students' learning.

As more teachers seek National Board certification, education leaders and politicians raise questions as to whether or not the process makes a difference in student learning (NBPTS, 2003). The National Board, universities, school systems, and government leaders are asking whether the investment of time and resources is worth it. Since the process is less than ten years old, research efforts have not yet been completed to demonstrate differences in student performance in the classrooms of National Board certified teachers. However, the Accomplished Teacher Validation Study (Bond, Jaeger, Smith, & Hattie, 2000) identifies the following thirteen indicators of teaching expertise to evaluate student performance in National Board certified teacher classrooms. Expert teachers:

(a) use knowledge of their subjects and help students link it to prior student knowledge;
(b) reconcile their content knowledge with student abilities;
(c) identify problems with curriculum and develop solutions that connect students, content, and context;
(d) adapt lesson flow to meet student needs;
(e) anticipate student behaviors to prevent students from disrupting class;

(f) draw on their deep understanding of verbal and non-verbal responses of students to adjust instruction;
(g) recognize the uniqueness of individual students in planning instruction;
(h) provide continuous feedback to students based on misconceptions;
(i) reassess instructional options continually;
(j) exhibit an enthusiasm for teaching that is linked to responsibility;
(k) care deeply for students and help students overcome barriers by showing they believe in them;
(l) have high expectations and engagement of everyone; and
(m) promote academic achievement in ways that emphasize personal accomplishment and intellectual engagement. (p. 8)

Bond, et al. (2000) found that the National Board certified teachers significantly out performed their colleagues on eleven of the thirteen indicators of student achievement, and that student achievement in the National Board-certified teachers' classrooms reflected a higher level of comprehension.

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION AS STAFF DEVELOPMENT DURING THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The National Board's certification process is superior to traditional methods of professional development in one crucial way: It requires ownership. Traditional staff development does not usually require teachers' ownership; it is usually "sit and take" and when done, teachers may, or may not, use what the class or workshop offered. In order for teachers to complete the National Board Certification process, they must take ownership of the process. They must take on the responsibility for completing the requirements on their own, or they will not succeed. The certification process is rigorous and requires a significant amount of self-reflection, often a painful process for teachers. National Board certified teachers demonstrate that they are reflective and analyze every aspect of planning, implementation, and student achievement, no matter the outcome. The reflective process is continuous, not compartmentalized as in traditional teaching and staff development.

National Board certification also differs from traditional staff development in its continuing validation of the teacher. At the end of a class or workshop, teachers often receive a certificate that shows that they have completed the requirements of the class, and often those requirements boil down to mere attendance. The material presented in a traditional staff development class typically is not internalized. In contrast, when teachers learn reflective teaching from going through the process of National Board certification, the teachers continually internalize and use what they have learned in future teaching. National Board certification validates teachers' methods and techniques. It tells the National Board certified teachers and their colleagues that the Board-certified teachers are reflective and accomplished in their respective fields. Because National Board certification is recognized nationwide as an indicator of quality, teachers have a sense of accomplishment when they receive their certificates. This validation instills confidence in most teachers and motivates them to try new things with their students. They understand that they do not have to be perfect and that students and teachers learn together. A new partnership develops between the teacher and the students that might not have been present earlier. Even if the partnership was present previously, teachers may not have understood why the partnership existed and how it worked before the reflective process of National Board certification.

School districts across the United States are feeling tremendous pressures to improve student test scores. Systems adopt models of instruction that have demonstrated the potential to improve test scores in other parts of the country. Schools conduct staff development workshops to help teachers implement the new models of instruction in their schools and classrooms, but often encounter resistance and stress among teachers trying to figure out how they are going to adapt their old methods of teaching to the new methods imposed upon them. Teachers, National Board certified or not, struggle over what is best for their students, academically and socially. An advantage that National Board certified teachers have, after going through the process, is the acceptance of the premise that they will do what is best for the students. Accomplished teachers understand the realities of politics, accountability, and curriculum changes, but they also know that they must do what is best for student learning.

After the Certification Process

Schools and systems often invite National Board certified teachers to act as facilitators to other teachers seeking National Board certification, using the skills they learned about themselves while seeking their own certification. Whole group instruction methods are usually ineffective. Recognizing that every teacher is unique, National Board certified teachers work with candidates individually to help them understand the components of reflective thinking practices. The certified teachers help candidates develop the self-analysis methods necessary for reflective teaching. This process of facilitating versus instructing colleagues provides opportunities for a healthy dialogue about teaching. Facilitating teachers recognize that all teachers use many methods appropriate for their students, and facilitators make no judgments about those methods. Facilitating teachers challenge candidates to examine and explain what they do, why they do it, and how they would do things differently if given the opportunity to re-teach a specific lesson to the same students. "Such an approach meets the standards of the National Staff Development Council for adult learning with its job-imbedded practices and the creation of learning communities" (Charlotte Collaborative, 2001, p. 7).

A mutually beneficial relationship develops between National Board certified teachers and candidates. The process of helping teachers seeking Board certification reminds National Board certified teachers of the techniques used in reflecting on their own teaching practices and the manner in which they carry out instruction in their classrooms. Teachers seeking Board certification experience a new way of thinking about their interactions with students and use methods that prove they are accomplished teachers. National Board certification makes candidates reflect on their intuitive methods and explain the many aspects of their teaching. The process can help teachers become conscious, reflective, and accomplished. The certification process also develops teachers into leaders. They become agents of change from within the teacher ranks as instructional lead teachers, mentors, or leaders on school councils. Other teachers, administrators, and community leaders often look to Board certified teachers for ideas for improving education.

A FINAL WORD ABOUT NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

National Board certification is a means of identifying teachers who are accomplished and reflective. The certification process is also a unique and powerful form of professional development. It requires teachers to look at themselves and their practices. Teachers can complete the process alone, with colleagues in their building, or with a group of trained facilitators guiding them. No matter which way they choose, the candidate teachers learn about themselves, and that learning process invokes permanent changes in their thinking and practice. Teachers who attempt National Board certification must be open to examining their practices in ways they never imagined. The growth achieved from the experience does not stop once the teacher finishes the certification process. The certification process seems to motivate National Board certified teachers to help other teachers in their buildings and school districts. Professional development continues formally and informally among National Board certified teachers and their colleagues. Interested readers should use the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards website (www.nbpts.org) to find out more about the available certificate areas, the certification process, whom to contact in their state for more information, and emerging research results concerning the effectiveness of National Board certified teachers.

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part II

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MIDDLE LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS

CHAPTER 9

LEADERSHIP STANDARDS OR LEAVING STANDARDIZATION FOR LEADERSHIP?

What Best Meets the Needs of a Middle Level Movement During Times of Severe Turbulence?

Steven Jay Gross
Temple University

ABSTRACT

In light of new standards and standards-based assessments for prospective middle school principals, this chapter will examine three propositions. First, standards and testing of prospective middle school leaders are compatible with that movement's goals. Second, these activities are not compatible. Third, the question of compatibility may not be as crucial as it initially appears in light of turbulence in the middle level movement due to today's policy environment. One goal of this chapter is to problematize the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) test, especially as they apply to the

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middle level movement so that their nature and possible impact might be considered critically.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, members of the middle level movement, and their allies, stand at a crossroad. Their movement, typified by an integrated core curriculum built upon student's developmental needs and interests, organized by teams, team teaching, cooperative, constructivist hands-on learning, and authentic assessment, is now juxtaposed against a very different national trend. This emergent agenda is based on externally imposed academic standards and high-stakes testing, best known as the accountability movement. It is ubiquitous, with versions in every state and now carries the force of the federal government in the form of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

For would-be administrators the accountability movement is equally real. Major national groups have created a series of new priorities for principals in recent years. Of particular relevance to middle school educators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals' (NAESP) *Standards for Quality Elementary and Middle Schools,* first published in 1984 and revised it twice, most recently in 1996. The same group also published *Elementary and Middle School Proficiencies for Principals* in 1986 revising this document twice as well, first in 1991 and again in 1997. In 2002, NAESP published *Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do.* Throughout the course of these publications, the direction of NAESP has moved steadily in the direction of a greater instructional role for principals as well as greater responsibility for results measured largely in standardized test scores.

NAESP is not alone in its effort to establish standards for those seeking the principal's position. Starting in 1994, twenty states, eleven professional educational organizations and learned societies, working under the sponsorship of the Council of Chief State School Officers, joined forces to create the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). With funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts and support from the Danforth Foundation and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, Director Neil Shipman and Chairman Joseph Murphy began the process of identifying the standards, knowledge, dispositions, and performances expected of future school leaders. The now well-known six ISLLC (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) standards are the result of that process.[1]

Almost at once, the Consortium's work began to be translated into a new assessment by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to be known as the

School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA)(ETS, 1999). The SLLA is a six-hour constructed-response evaluation in which principal candidates reply to a series of hypothetical problems and dilemmas. Answers are scored against a pre-determined rubric so that evaluators can compare responses to the ISLLC standards. To date, ten states use the SLLA, eight of which have established a passing score.[2] Adding to the weight of the ISLLC/SLLA's impact is the February 2003 unveiling of a suggested curriculum for educational administration programs supported by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and Sylvan Learning Systems.

Because the ISLLC standards are similar to those of NAESP, have been adopted by groups like AASA, are tied to new curriculum ventures in educational administration, are the product of the chief state school officers, and especially because they are the basis of the ETS's SLLA examination, they deserve particular attention. Therefore, this chapter will focus upon the ways that the middle level movement might elect to respond to the ISLLC standards and the SLLA assessment.

Before describing the approach I will take in this chapter, I must make a small confession. Like many readers, I have significant personal experience with large scale standards and assessment in general and in the ISLLC/SLLA phenomena in particular. As Chief of Curriculum and Instruction for the state of Vermont in the early 1990s, I recall colleagues remarking that we could really get a handle on classroom instructional practice if we had a strong assessment program. While I disagreed with the spirit of those words, I understood the accuracy of that idea and have seen it played out for good and for ill in schools around the country.[3]

As co-coordinator of the Educational Administration program at Temple University, I helped guide our program through a process of detailed curriculum mapping to make sure that we did respond to the ISLLC standards. We also developed a series of workshops for those preparing for the SLLA assessment. This work was time consuming and tedious.[4] I think it is fair to say that our program faculty reflected a range of opinions about the worth of this process. None of us offered outright resistance to the exercise, however, since the SLLA was required for all those aspiring to be principals in our home state of Pennsylvania.

Reflecting on my personal experiences, I was left wondering, what position does one take? How might each of us remain a reasonably independent agent, in touch with our own philosophy and still be strategic in action? I am grateful for this opportunity to write about this issue since it has given me the chance to work through various positions and come to, what I hope is a reasoned and reasonable conclusion.

At first, there seemed to be two possible positions regarding this issue. Either the ISLLC standards and the SLLA assessment were compatible with the middle level movement, or they were not. Construction of this dichotomous argument seemed straight forward and the finished work might logically have ended with a summary of each side, followed by an announcement of a winning perspective. With deeper reflection, a third possibility emerged. Perhaps the question of ISLLC/SLLA is overshadowed by a more pressing issue such as the turbulent state of the middle level movement itself. Further, it may be that dealing with the turbulence at the middle level could reveal more appropriate priorities for responsive middle school leadership education.

Therefore, this chapter is shaped by consideration of three propositions (Figure 9.1), avoiding what I fear might be a false dichotomy. First, I will consider the proposition that the middle level movement is compatible with the ISLLC standards and the SLLA assessment, in other words, that these support each other. Second, I will build the opposite case, that they are incompatible and that the middle level movement should not acquiesce to their imposition. The third proposition rejects both of these views declaring that compatibility is not at the crux of the problem, but severe turbulence surrounding the middle level movement is of greater concern. Flowing from this proposition is a strategy to lower the level of turbulence as well as

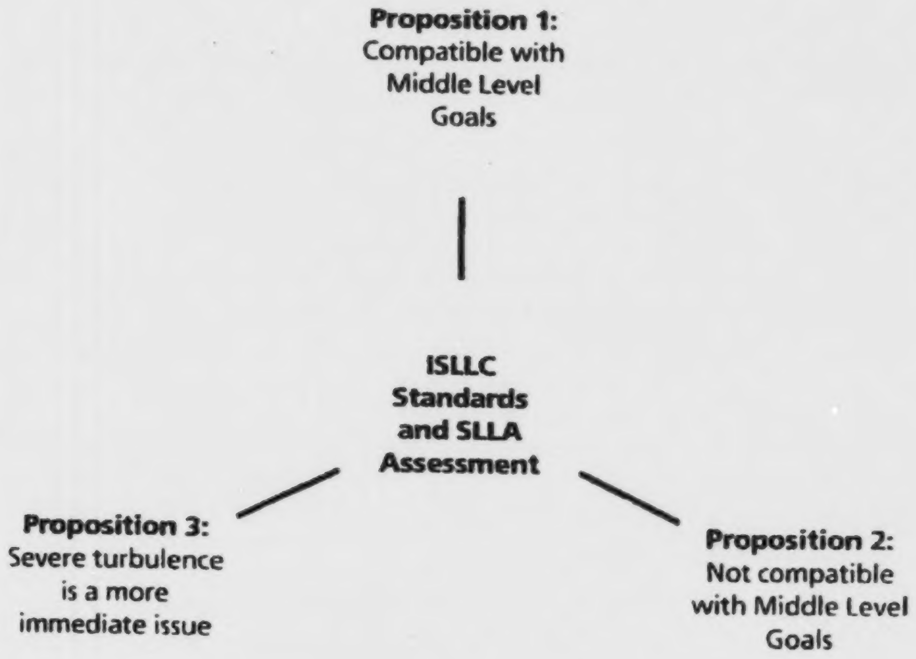
Proposition 1:
Compatible with Middle Level Goals
ISLLC Standards and SLLA Assessment
Proposition 3:
Severe turbulence is a more immediate issue
Proposition 2:
Not compatible with Middle Level Goals

Figure 9.1. The three propositions used to consider ISLLC/SSLA and today's Middle Level Movement.

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renew leadership preparation along lines that are more friendly to middle level values. The ISLLC standards and the SLLA assessment are just as much a part of today's educational landscape as is the middle level movement. How they do or do not fit is a crucial question to consider. My hope is that by using these three propositions we might arrive at a fair judgment.

Proposition 1: *There is Compatibility Between the Middle Level Movement and Standards/Testing for Prospective Administrators.*

A review of recent literature drawn from the fields of school reform, standards, and middle school reform in particular does reveal an argument in support of this proposition. Writers leaning in this direction feel that the field shows leadership in setting standards since that act is one hallmark of a true profession. As we have seen, educational administration scholars have guided the ISLLC standards, and it is hard to argue with these six categories, according to their supporters. At a time of diminished public confidence in educational administration in general and in middle level leadership, in particular, advocates for standards and testing believe that their position will bolster sagging support.

Specific arguments in favor of standard and testing for aspiring middle level principals flow from four inter-connected lines of thinking (Figure 9.2). One argument shows support for academic standards in general for the middle level. Second, some middle level structures, such as teams, lend themselves to standards, according to some writers. A third pro-standards argument ties the first two to standards for leaders, namely, in a standards-based era, effective leaders will orient themselves to this concept. Fourth, by joining the standards movement, middle level leaders will move their own movement away from isolation.

First, there is support of what are referred to as high standards for middle grades students themselves in the literature. For instance, writers such as Norton (2000) find no contraction between the middle level movement's philosophy and high standards.

> After years of bickering about the relative merits of developmental support and academic rigor in the middle grades, a growing number of middle grades interest groups are finding some common ground in the notion of balancing 'high support,' and 'high standards.' (p. 2)

Norton (2000) goes further to state that the original *Turning Points* document (1989) also supported the twin vision of responsive programs with high academic standards. The trouble, according to Norton, is that the developmental needs of middle level students overwhelmed the discussion and the subsequent agenda of the movement. "Looking back today, it's apparent that *Turning Points'* message about social and emotional support had a far greater impact on educators than its corresponding message

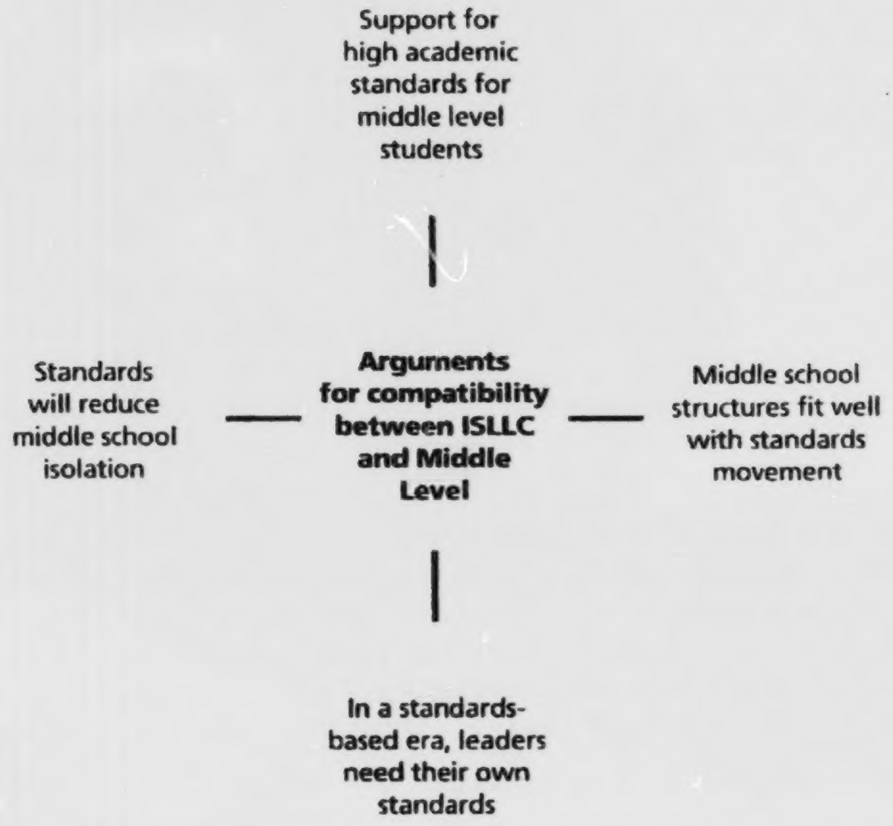
Support for high academic standards for middle level students
Standards will reduce middle school isolation
Arguments for compatibility between ISLLC and Middle Level
Middle school structures fit well with standards movement
In a standards-based era, leaders need their own standards

Figure 9.2. Proposition 1: Four arguments supporting compatibility between ISLLC and the Middle Level Movement.

about the need to strengthen the academic core of middle schools" (p. 2). This perspective seems at least friendly to the notion of specific standards for those wishing to lead middle schools as well.

Allied to the concept that the full middle level philosophy fits comfortably with high standards is the second argument favoring compatibility. Not only is there a fit between the middle level movement's philosophy and high standards, there is a fit between the central organizing practices and structures of the movement and the standards movement. Johnson (2002) quotes Alvin Junior High School principal, Linda Robinson, in this regard.

> The potential is to think we can't team anymore because we have to meet the standards. Just the opposite is true… We need the team's support and knowledge of each child to be sure that all students are successful in meeting the standards. (p. 1)

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Far from pulling in opposite directions, standards for leaders would probably be in harmony with a standards-based approach to middle level programs. Seen in this light, high-stakes accountability testing for students can be pursued with middle level mechanisms such as the team. Principals who themselves followed a standards-based program followed by a standards-based, high-stakes assessment would be in harmony with such an approach.

The third leg of the argument for compatibility also relates to the general standards movement. In this line of reasoning, we live in a standards-based era, therefore, effective leaders will orient themselves to standards. This has led some to conclude that we need to make a switch away from the principal as instructional leader to the principal as lead learner (DuFour, 2002; Mann, 2003). We need to pay particular attention, however, to the definition of lead learner used by these writers. According to DuFour (2002), the principal is not so focused on her or his own learning, but on the learning of students, demonstrated in part, at least, through standardized tests.

> By concentrating on teaching, the instructional leader of the past emphasized the inputs of the learning process. By concentrating on learning, today's school leaders shift both their own focus and that of the school community from inputs to outcomes and from intentions to results. Schools need principal leadership as much as ever. But only those who understand that the essence of their job is promoting student and teacher learning will be able to provide that leadership. (p. 15)

DuFour uses the ISLLC standards as the foundation for insisting on this approach by principals. Olson (2000) substantiates the importance of ISLLC by the fact that over half the states either adopted or adapted these standards.

The compatibility argument is completed by a fourth set of ideas stating that the mixed reputation of the middle level movement itself will be helped by fixing on high standards for students and for principals. First, there is recent evidence showing that a majority of middle school principals support core subject standards for their students (Jacobson, 1997). Following this, middle school leaders may have few objections to the larger standards movement applied to prospective principals. Next, by joining the standards movement, middle level leaders can help middle schools move away from a kind of ideologically self-imposed isolation. Lipsitz and Mizell (1997) criticize the middle movement's "failure to become integrated with other large-scale school reform efforts," thus placing these schools in a position where they have, "lost an opportunity to win political support" (p. 9). Clearly, this escape from isolation into today's standards-based world would be furthered by having all aspiring middle school principals attend university programs aligned to the ISLLC standards and sit for tests such as the SLLA. Students preparing for the SLLA would have to transcend the parochial thinking of any particular department of educational administration if they wanted to do well on the exam since rubrics reflect , "a set of nationally recognized standards for school leaders" (Holloway, 2002, p. 71).[5]

The ISLLC standards and the SLLA assessment, would place middle school principal candidates in the mainstream of current thinking, according to these writers. Neither the limits of the movement's own inward orientation nor the peculiarities of related preparation program or individual faculty will stand in the way. The great number of powerful organizations and states that gave birth to ISLLC/SLLA add considerable weight to this argument.

Proposition 2: *There is Serious Incompatibity.*

Just as the literature can be used to support the position that standards and tests for aspiring principals is compatible with the larger goals of the middle level movement, it can also be used to make the opposite case. Four lines of reasoning raise doubts about the usefulness, relevance or even the benign nature of the ISLLC standards and the SLLA tests in particular (Figure 9.3). First, the standards movement, to some writers, acts like a black cloud of locusts, overwhelming everything in its path and choking any other reform directions, including those dear to the hearts of middle level educators. Second, there are specific weaknesses with the ISLLC standards themselves and, therefore, with the SLLA test that flows from them. Third, the standards movement and the pressures that it places upon preparation programs for K–12 approaches harms the middle school movement by depriving it of leaders with specialized skills, knowledge and experiences. Finally, the ISLLC standards and the SLLA assessment are touted as unique answers in the quest for unifying educational leadership concepts. Since this is not the case, the looming hegemony of ISLLC standards merely serves to delimit other, possibly richer, concepts.

Will there be room for anything else besides standards for anyone? Some may argue that the standards movement and its companion assessments are not all encompassing. In fact, this line of debate follows from the standards movement largely imposed upon districts from the state level, and now, through No Child Left Behind, on the national level. I have heard one state commissioner of education explain that the standards are only meant to cover a fraction of the educational agenda leaving plenty of time for other pursuits. But in practice, many feel that testing and preparation for it takes over. It also legitimizes a mode of thinking and a style of discourse. Counter movements, pushing against the grain, may quickly become discordant and even suspicious in the eyes of test makers and test

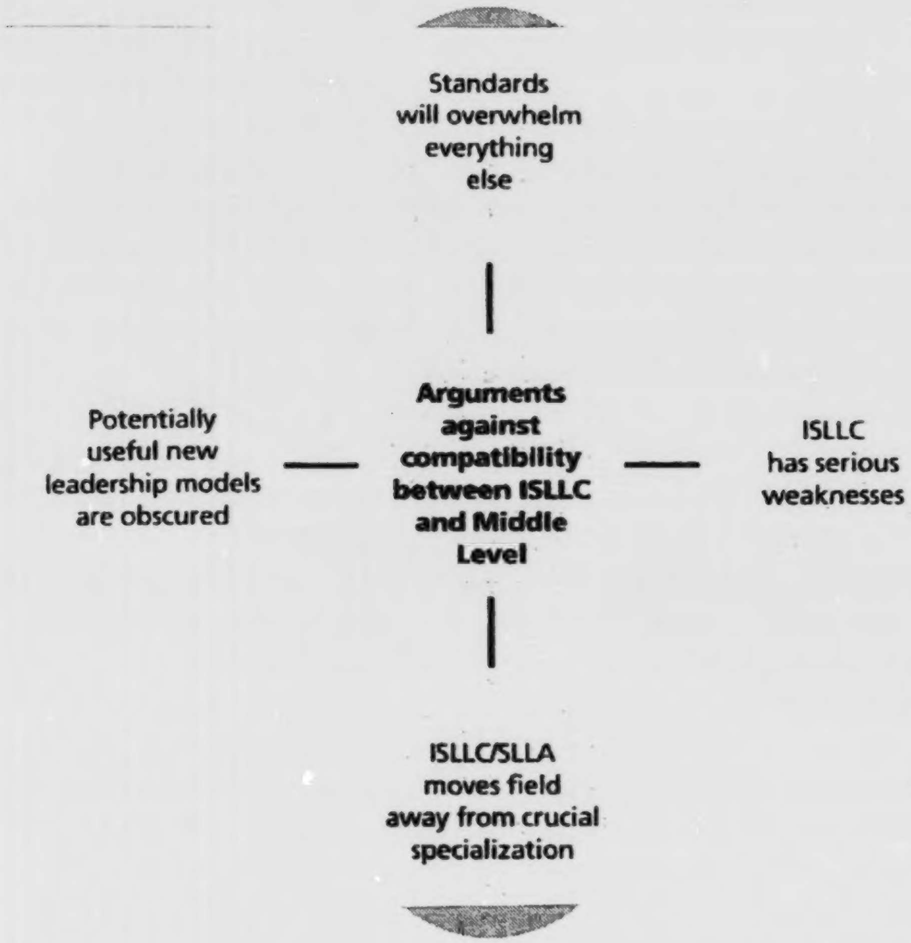
Standards will overwhelm everything else
Potentially useful new leadership models are obscured
Arguments against compatibility between ISLLC and Middle Level
ISLLC has serious weaknesses
ISLLC/SLLA moves field away from crucial specialization

Figure 9.3. Proposition 2: Four arguments against compatibility between ISLLC and the middle level movement.

takers. This is especially significant for the middle level movement, whose foundational documents such as *This We Believe (NMSA, 1995)*, rail against the domination of content over process.

For future middle level principals, just as for their students, high-stakes tests take time to prepare for, and are attached to serious rewards and sanctions. In the case of those preparing to lead middle schools, failing may mean losing a job offer and waiting months to try again at the costs of additional hundreds of dollars. How much tolerance will there be for other perspectives in preparation programs, especially those running counter to the dominant ISLLC/SLLA mindset?

At its core, a standards approach seeks to create a linear system of publicized expectations along with aligned training and assessments. How can this reasoning possibly co-exist with voices asking us to consider leadership

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to be an art form (Tirozzi, 2001)? Some writers, like Ferrandino (2001) see a place for ISLLC standards among other needed reforms for current and future principals. One wonders, however, the extent to which anything else will be heard in preparation programs. Where will the critical edge calling into question the relevance of the standards in changing times come from? Even if the standards were considered relevant to the middle level leader today, how can they hope to remain so without this kind of feedback loop? With so much pressure to conform to imposed rules, standards and high-stakes tests, it is difficult to imagine how independent reflection can be used to construct alternatives, at least on the part of aspiring middle level principals. How is a lock-step approach to leadership compatible with the middle level philosophy?

Allied with the argument that the standards movement in general will overwhelm everything in its path are arguments that directly or indirectly cast doubt on the SLLA test itself and, therefore, on the centrality of the ISLLC standards upon which it is based. The role of principal as keeper of the middle school's vision is considered by several scholars (Brown & Anfara, 2002). However, with the imposition of standards, a consequentially more standardized curriculum and assessment system, just whose vision are we talking about; the leader's, the middle level's or that of the test preparer's? In an environment of high-stakes testing for future middle school leaders, does the SLLA encourage introspection leading to a powerful personal vision to share, or does it lead to homogenized concepts that could hardly be called compelling visions? Does one build a vision for educational leadership from the inside, through reflection, or from the outside through externally sanctioned rules? Just as important for the topic at hand, which process is more in keeping with the middle level's general approach?

School leaders armed with enough critical and analytic capacity are also called for. Tirozzi (2001) challenges leaders to raise basic issues that challenge popular assumptions about schooling. This type of reflection has been described as double looping (Morgan, 1995) and seems highly appropriate in a time of rapid change. Yet there is an inherent contradiction when we ask prospective middle school principals to align their thinking and activities to an existing set of standards (ISLLC) and prepare for an all or nothing test (SLLA) based on those standards while simultaneously asking them to harbor the critical skills necessary to deconstruct those same standards and find more workable alternatives. If nothing else, this seems to be a fitting recipe for the development of a sense of irony if not outright cynicism.

This line of criticism runs parallel to that raised over the standards movement as a whole. Writers like Ferrandino (2001) compare the content focus on high-stakes testing to other, equally consequential goals. "But by concentrating on high-stakes tests, are we losing sight of the needs of the whole child; the psychological and emotional needs, as well as the need for civic and social interactions that school should provide "(p. 4)? Ferrandino then describes the goals that parents and teachers set for students (much more aligned with social and emotional outcomes). This raises the question of whose standards are we making the most important? Families and local educators or policy crafters far removed from classrooms? Can we reasonably expect to promote this kind of critical thinking and its likely ethical dilemmas for leaders when we standardize the education of these same people and insist upon conformity through the use of gate-keeping standardized tests?

The SLLA test itself has also been criticized directly. Anderson (2002) finds a problem with the rubrics upon which test takers are evaluated because they emphasize superficial responses to profound questions, including such central middle level issues as diversity and community outreach. According to Anderson,

> They (the rubrics) represent a crude attempt to rate complex narrative answers with a point system, to quantify qualitative data. The respondents who address the greatest number of rubrics receive the highest grades, even if their work is generally mediocre and they include problematic ideas that contradict the standards themselves. (p. 69)[6]

Compounding the question of rubrics is the acceptance of them as normative measures when SLLA tests are evaluated. As we have seen, training of the evaluators is logically aimed at enhancing inter-rater reliability, but this means ever more attention to the pre-determined rubrics, thus implicating the test evaluators in the same values problem. The internal logic of the assessment process demands such fidelity to rubrics, however, the greater issue remains, when and under what circumstances do the rubrics themselves come under critical scrutiny?

Anderson (2002) considers these problems of the SLLA as an outgrowth of the limits of the ISLLC standards themselves. The standards sound high minded but do not exist in a policy or political vacuum.

> The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards reflect mainstream thinking in education: They move instructional leadership to center stage, emphasize parent involvement, advocate the idea that all students can learn, promote professional growth and call for safer schools.
>
> Embedded in the language of the standards, however, lurk the old assumptions of a conservative field that has historically been more heavily influenced by military science ("strategic planning"), engineering ("alignment," "operational procedures," "core technology,"), industrial psychology ("human

> resources management"), and business ("entrepreneurship," "ownership," "marketing strategies") than by education itself. (p 70)

Even if the standards movement did not threaten to overwhelm other approaches and even if there were no inherent problems with the ISLLC standards or the SLLA test itself, there would still be a roadblock sitting squarely ahead of these tests for future middle level principals. Since the standards and the test represent a generic set of values, approaches and content knowledge, they move away from specialization for the middle grades. This departure from specialization directly contradicts a central tenet of the middle grades movement since its inception, calling its raison d'être into question.

High quality middle level teachers are described as having a blend of advanced content knowledge and a mature understanding of the emotional and developmental needs of middle grades students (Manzo, 2002). McEwin, Dickenson and Smith (2002) elaborate this point with what they refer to as a consensus of requirements for quality middle level teacher preparation programs. Four content knowledge areas in their list include:

- Thorough study of early adolescence
- Comprehensive study of middle level philosophy and organization
- Thorough study of middle level curricula
- Intensive training in planning, teaching, and assessment using developmentally and responsive practices. (p. 2)

The urgency to prepare future middle level teachers with these kinds of specialized skills is only heightened when we consider the looming teacher shortage in those grades (Tirozzi, 2001). Equally important is a parallel shortage of middle level principals (Doud & Keller, 1998). This group of writers makes a strong case for a well-focused cadre of middle school teachers. Yet, there is a strong connection between the training and expertise of the middle level faculty and that of the administrators charged to lead them. Brown and Anfara (2002) advise that we tear down the barriers separating teachers and administrators in middle schools to create what they call a unified profession. How can we follow this advice if these schools contain a faculty well versed in middle level issues and administrators whose education and assessment are attuned to a generic K–12 perspective?

All of this means that we face the prospect of a miss-match between the orientation and priorities of middle level teachers and their leaders in the future. While the ISLLC standards and the SLLA test do not prohibit more specialized knowledge of the middle school, its students and their needs, they do not guarantee such a perspective. As was pointed out above, the very fact that these standards and assessment have such a serious impact on programs and their students could easily result in devaluing other areas of knowledge, formally through reduction in specialized middle level courses, and informally as students respond to the immediate pressures of test preparation.

A final argument stressing incompatibility flows from all of the previous objections. If the ISLLC/SLLA are imperfect and move the field away from more relevant knowledge while they simultaneously crowd out other approaches, there are alternatives that may go unexamined in the process of aligning to required standards and passing required tests. Fullan (2002) enumerates what he calls action-and-mind sets (strong sense of purpose, understanding the dynamics of change, emotional intelligence, a commitment to developing and sharing new knowledge, and a capacity at coherence making). These, too, may find their way into programs for middle level leaders but I am not sanguine about their chances if they are not seen as fitting directly under one or more of the six standards. Brown, Anfara and Gross (2002) presented a middle school model for the principalship in our call for a leadership responsive to the needs of young adolescents. This model included a balance between the developmental needs of middle level students, middle level faculty and the developmental needs of the school itself.[7]

These are only two possible alternatives to or elaborations of the ISLLC standards. There are many others. With so much momentum behind them, the standards and assessment not only threaten other approaches, they act as a gatekeeper. Aligned ideas will be permitted access, unfriendly ideas or unrelated ideas will be deemed irrelevant or even antithetical to the drive for excellence in the corps of administrators, and therefore stripped of their legitimacy. In such a regimented world how might the original concept of the middle level ever have boiled up to the surface?

Those who consider the ISLLC/SLLA incompatible with the middle level movement might conclude their argument this way: These standards, when linked to a powerful assessment, and new curriculum and instruction for principal preparation programs make a CIA triangle (curriculum-instruction-assessment (see Gross 2002), that is Essentialist in character, relying upon scientific management in its approach (Figure 9.4). That very orientation makes the standards and assessment inappropriate to the middle level movement whose roots are clearly grounded in the Progressive tradition (Gross, 2002).[8]

What we are really talking about in considering ISLLC and SLLA is an engine created to churn out uniform principals as a product. This is an efficiency model. How does that model relate to the quest for a passionate, inspiring, and responsive middle level movement designed to treat children as individuals with unique traits?

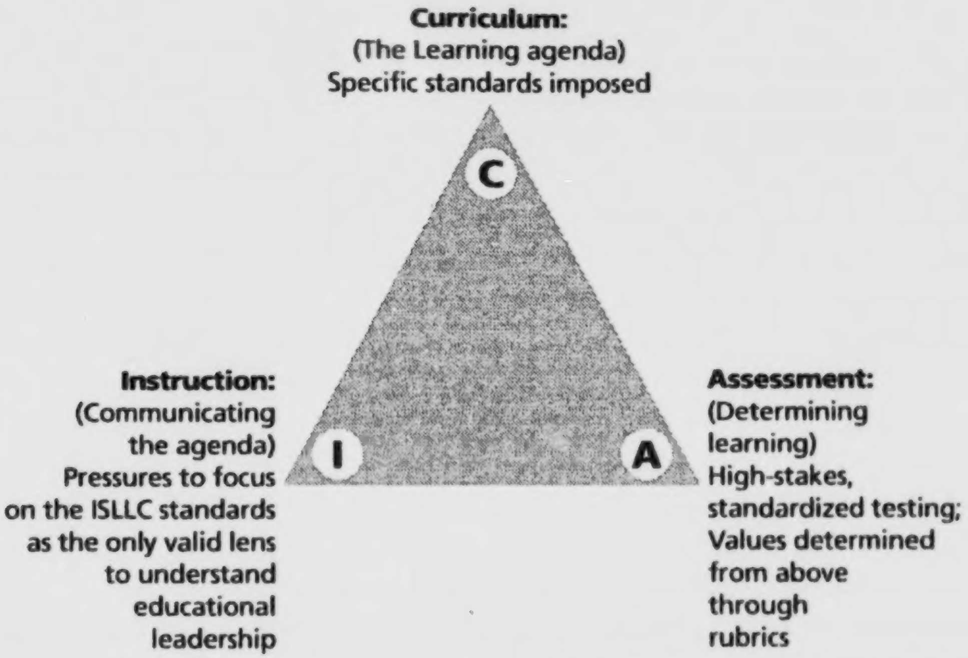
Curriculum:
(The Learning agenda)
Specific standards imposed
C
Instruction:
(Communicating the agenda)
Pressures to focus on the ISLLC standards as the only valid lens to understand educational leadership
I
A
Assessment:
(Determining learning)
High-stakes, standardized testing;
Values determined from above through rubrics

Figure 9.4. The Essentialist character of the ISLLC/SLLA standards and assessment.

Proposition 3: *Compatibility Is Not the Crux of the Issue, Severe Turbulence Is.*

Before settling on one or the other possibility suggested above, it is useful to consider a different perspective. What if the question of compatibility is only the first layer of the problem? What if the arguments for or against compatibility between ISLLC/SLLA and the middle level movement surround a more complex and more serious question? I propose that this is the case (Figure 9.5). Using Turbulence Theory, I describe a state of severe turbulence now buffeting the middle level movement. I then suggest strategies for middle level building leaders to keep severe turbulence from escalating to the extreme level. At that point we can consider the question of whether the ISLLC/SLLA standards and assessment deserve to be at center stage or whether engaging in them only delays effective leadership responses to a much more serious problem; the continued viability of the middle school movement itself.

Considering this Issue in the Light of Turbulence Theory

Writing about the state of educational administration at Temple University I referred to Turbulence Theory (Gross, 2003).

> In a study of ten schools and districts in North America engaged in sustained innovation, (Gross, 1998), I found that successful planning and implementa-

tion of school programs did not inoculate these organizations from facing a range of serious, sometimes intimidating challenges that seemed poise to capsize the whole enterprise. Taking a cue from pilots who must fly through disturbed air, I used the metaphor of turbulence to describe the various conditions facing these schools and districts. Like today's pilots, I defined four levels of turbulence ranging from light, where challenges are well known and where systems can easily be put in place to respond, to extreme, where the entire school or district faces almost certain demise if something drastic is not done very quickly. Among the schools and districts studied, I found examples of light, moderate and severe turbulence and documented the types of responses that were made. In a later study (Gross, 2001), I describe a case of extreme turbulence where the entire school reform collapsed. I also found that inaction seemed to be associated with a drift toward a heightening of turbulence and the need for a more sustained and serious response (p. 54).

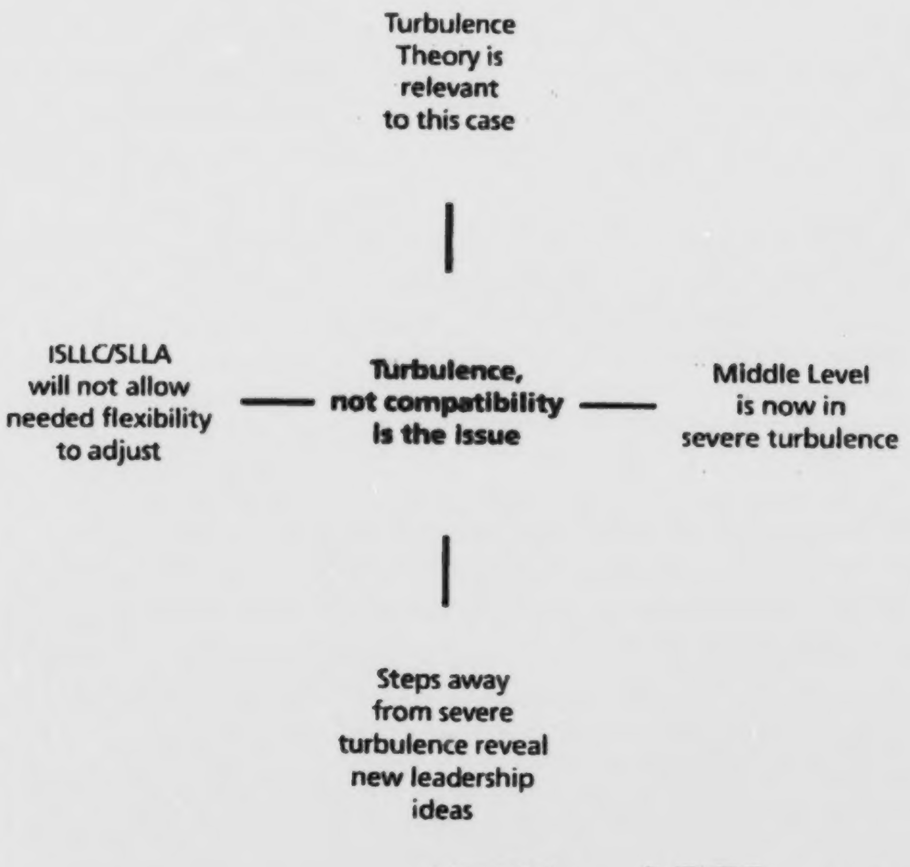
Turbulence Theory is relevant to this case
ISLLC/SLLA will not allow needed flexibility to adjust
Turbulence, not compatibility is the issue
Middle Level is now in severe turbulence
Steps away from severe turbulence reveal new leadership ideas

Figure 9.5. Proposition 3: Four arguments favoring turbulence as a more relevant issue.

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Considering all of the challenges currently facing the middle level movement, I suggest that it is currently facing severe turbulence. Schools and other organizations facing severe turbulence have these qualities in common (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1. Turbulence Gauge for Today's Middle Level Movement

Degree of Turbulence	*General Definition*	*Turbulence as it is applied in this situation*
Light	Associated with ongoing issues, little or no disruption in normal work environment, subtle signs of stress	Middle level philosophy seen as the rising tide. No serious criticism exists nationally. Harmony between this movement and other national trends. Growing number of middle schools. Key challenge is how to grow and maintain quality.
Moderate	Widespread awareness of the issue, specific origins	Some debate about selected middle level concepts. Some non-middle level experiments gaining acceptance. These do not amount to an effort to up-end the movement.
Severe	Fear for the entire enterprise, possibility of large-scale community demonstrations, a feeling of crisis	Public attacks on the middle level approach. Serious warnings from leaders about the future. Threats to key features of the model such as the integrative curriculum
Extreme	Structural damage to the reform movement is occurring. Collapse of the reform seems likely	Large scale shut-down of middle schools. Dismissal of middle level values as harmful to children's academic progress. Break-up of national support structures.

First, there is a fear for the entire enterprise. In a school, a reform program may be at risk. At the national movement level, we would look for statements from respected leaders that the movement's future is in doubt.

Second there are typically large scale public displays of disapproval. Schools might experience heated board meetings where hundreds of parents show up to denounce a controversial program. At the national level programs under severe turbulence find themselves the target of attack in articles and with a build-up of counter organizations.

Third, there is general feeling of crisis. Teachers and administrators facing severe turbulence wonder how long the can hold onto reforms that they value. At the national level, there is concern over losing keystones of the movement due to the pounding blows of turbulent air surrounding their enterprise. Normally, some will despair.

What evidence is there that today's middle level movement is encountering severe turbulence?

First, there is a declared fear for the enterprise. In articles such as *Middle Schools Under Siege: Points of Attack*, (Beane, 1999) key middle level movement leaders have sounded an alarm. Well-respected practitioners like Carol Smith (2001) describe the unequal burden placed upon middle level educators. "Progressive educators throughout the country are asked to continually defend their practice, connect the standards, and provide evidence of student learning. Generally, more traditional teachers and classrooms are not expected to defend their work in the same way. The status quo is accepted almost carte blanche" (p. 5).

Next, there have been numerous public attacks on the middle level movement. In a recent article on the state of middle level reform, Norton (2000) notes the observations of Ruth Mitchell, senior researcher at the Education Trust, who states, "I think that we should abandon the whole middle school concept. Middle schools are a disaster. They slow down the intellectual progress that kids make in elementary school and they effectively preclude readiness for college for many minority kids" (p. 4). Those who think that these threats are mere rhetoric or political posturing might consider the fact that the city of Philadelphia now plans to do away with all middle schools over the next five years and replace them with K–8 configurations.

Third, there are fears over losing key elements of the middle level movement's program. One case in point is the fear of losing the integrated curriculum in the face of discipline based standards matched with high-stakes standardized tests. As one writer observed,

> The problem comes from tying standards to high-stakes tests and expecting all students to reach the same adult-determined level of performance at the same time. This is a blatant violation of everything that is known about individual differences and about the impact of threat on human thinking, not to mention the serious shortcomings of most paper-and-pencil tests. Add the fact that most standards focus on low-level objectives in specific subject areas and the threat to curriculum integration is indeed serious. (Vars 2001, p. 8)

In an earlier chapter for this book series (Gross, 2002), I described the origins of the middle movement as an outgrowth of the Progressive education movement, now challenged by a largely Essentialist series of ideas. Key among the Essentialist ideas are a standardized curriculum and accountability for students, teachers, and principals attached to significant rewards and sanctions (Figure 9.6). Even in friendlier times, the middle level reforms, including significant curriculum integration, require continued development and commitment beyond that called for in more traditional settings (Erlandson & McVittie, 2001; Weilbacher, 2001). With the coming

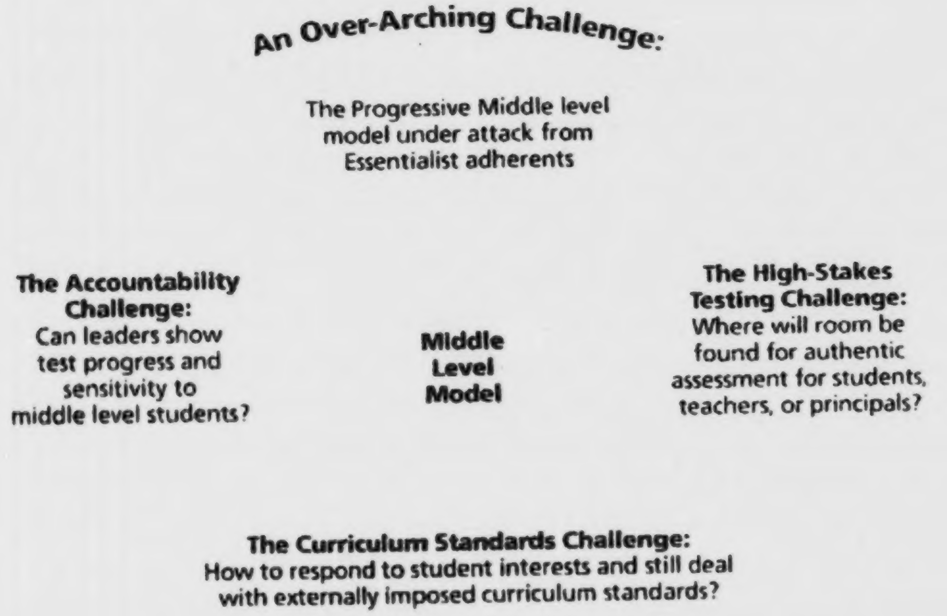
An Over-Arching Challenge:
The Progressive Middle level model under attack from Essentialist adherents
The Accountability Challenge: Can leaders show test progress and sensitivity to middle level students?
Middle Level Model
The High-Stakes Testing Challenge: Where will room be found for authentic assessment for students, teachers, or principals?
The Curriculum Standards Challenge: How to respond to student interests and still deal with externally imposed curriculum standards?

Figure 9.6. The philosophical crux of the problem.

of an Essentialist style of accountability, these efforts need to be redoubled, if they are likely to remain alive in tomorrow's middle schools. Thus, the evidence above shows a middle level movement in severe turbulence, not necessarily because of its own inherent problems, but more likely because of its inherent philosophical conflict with currently dominant policy philosophies.

Since we can reasonably consider the middle movement to be in severe turbulence, what relevant training and assessment might the next generation of middle level leaders undertake? Research into schools and districts facing severe turbulence showed that constructive responses are possible, thus avoiding the collapse of reform (Gross, 1998). However, these responses are complex and require focused, sustained emphasis. Specifically, these six strategies were used to extricate the district from severe turbulence:

- Avoid a bunker mentality. Coming under fire may spark a desire to turn inward but that is dysfunctional. Middle level leaders need to know where their allies are locally, regionally and nationally. They need to have a support network and know how to use it. This information is often specific to the middle level.
- Schools and districts kept in mind their basic stability. Prospective middle level leaders should have a clear grasp of the history, philosophy, and under-girding rationales for their schools and be prepared to share these publicly.

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- Altered organizational structures and new innovations became possible in the wake of severe turbulence. School leaders should have enough knowledge about middle level education to be able to help design new patterns that preserve the essence of their philosophy rather than fight in an all-or-nothing mode. This requires deep levels of understanding and strategic planning.
- Personnel changes were frequent. Rather than fearing the loss of a position and turn toward defensive behaviors, we need to educate middle level principals to take responsibility for their own careers, value their unique gifts, and plan to work where they can learn and grow as professionals. This is diametrically opposed to training leading to acquiescence to a faceless authority whose actions may violate one's key philosophical beliefs.
- A deep process that engaged many factions of the community. For middle level leaders, this means building bridges specifically linked to middle level parents and helping other community members to understand the needs and abilities of learners at this age.
- All parties agreed to stay as objective as possible. This means that the middle level leader needs to have access and command of crucial data, at the school, district, national and international levels *as these bear upon middle level priorities.*

All of these responses to severe turbulence require a great deal of flexibility matched with concrete, detailed understandings of the middle level school and its peculiar possibilities and demands. Saving the integrative curriculum, for instance, is not a matter of blandly proclaiming its virtues to parents and the press. Leaders must be able to work through the knotty details of curriculum mapping, encourage teachers to partner effectively, supplement standardized tests with viable authentic assessments, and to understand how to communicate all of that to an increasingly dubious public and policy environment.

Yet the Essentialist accountability movement now dominating education in North America, by its nature is antithetical to flexibility (Gross, Shaw, & Shapiro, 2002) and the ISSLC standards and the SLLA assessment do not include specific references to middle level education. As we have seen, they push strongly in the opposite direction. ISLLC/SLLA are part of an outdated industrial model based on hierarchically imposed, centralized authority aiming at uniformity of results. This model stands in contrast to the middle level movement that has transcended command and control goals by its focus on the current needs of learners and through the use of flexible organizational responses. Dealing with standardizing processes would be a step backwards.

Proposition Three rejects the idea that the middle level movement is on solid ground. Therefore, a de-contextualized review of the ISLLC/SLLA is not only inappropriate, it is a serious distracter to the future viability of the middle level agenda. Worse than merely being incompatible with that agenda (Proposition Two), Proposition Three holds that debating itself will take vital energy away from the immediate need to ratchet-down the turbulence surrounding the middle level programs from an unsustainable severe level.

The steps, outlined above, needed to make this transition to a safer level of turbulence could be part of the guiding principles for educating the next generation of middle level leaders[9]. This could result in a system for educating and assessing principals that truly resonates with the middle level movement, growing from the inside-out, filled with developmentally appropriate support structures and times for self reflection leading to continuous authentic assessment. These concepts, combined with other central ideas (Brown & Anfara, 2002; Brown, Anfara, & Gross, 2002; Dickerson & Butler, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Lorain, 1997; Pitton, 2001), may create an agenda for timely middle level leadership education designed to sustain deeply held philosophical beliefs (Carnegie Task Force, 1989; NMSA, 1995) that are currently at risk.

CONCLUSION

Without question, ISLLC and SLLA are a growing part of the landscape for current and prospective middle level leaders and those charged with their professional development. While this chapter should not be read as an argument for ignoring ISLLC or the SLLA test, it is a case for placing these among a constellation of other useful ideas that may sustain a responsive, resilient, middle level leadership corps. We can use cannons in our learning agenda, but to paraphrase the political scientist Benjamin Barber (1992), we need to make these loose cannons. Where as Proposition One embraces ISLLC/SLLA and Proposition Two criticizes that move, Proposition Three articulates a positive alternative, grounded in the current circumstances of the middle level movement. This means finding ways to deal first with severe turbulence so that there will be a movement left to lead.

As I began I remarked that middle level educators stand at a crossroads. Perhaps because I live in Middlebury, Vermont, this image reminds me of our town's favorite poet, Robert Frost (1993), and his well-known work, *The Road Not Taken.* To my mind, either reflexively accepting or impulsively rejecting ISLLC/SLLA represents the same path since neither encompasses a broader view of the turbulence in today's middle schools. Transcending either/or thinking by turning to a creative alternative that deals first with severe turbulence means embarking upon the road less taken. To paraphrase Frost, "and that will make all of the difference."

NOTES

1. Murphy (2002) has subsequently explored a reconceptualization of educational administration itself in a direction he calls re-culturing.
2. Grogan and Andrews (2002) point out that SLLA scores may serve to provide timely feedback on the quality of educational administration programs.
3. Fortunately, Vermont's version of accountability testing has been moderate so far and the image of too much central control is not in evidence.
4. I will admit that there were moments when the whole venture reminded me of the intricate preparation undertaken by teachers and students in imperial China as they nervously marched toward the examination to enter the civil service bureaucracy.
5. Holloway (2002) expands on the issue of educational administration faculty judgment when these individuals score SLLA responses. "Often the biggest hurdle for the professors and school leaders who attend the scoring training is the temptation to apply their own standards to the item and the candidate's responses. During training, scorers learn to assess the merit of responses on the basis of their application of the consortium standards. They learn to put aside their biases and make informed judgment about responses..." (p. 74).
6. After many hours pouring over the test, the rubrics and examples of evaluations based on the rubrics, I must agree with this analysis. The approach of the SLLA is one of imposed conformity lurking under the cloak of freely constructed responses to complex question. It also depends largely on hypothetical thinking since it is administered to prospective leaders who have, at best, second-hand knowledge of real world school leadership.
7. In a study of ten schools and districts across north America, I found ten common qualities that successful leaders shared (Gross, 1998). While some of these correlate with the ISLLC standards, I am not at all sure that these highly respected veteran leaders would be able to pass the SLLA examination as it is currently designed, yet I would heartily recommend the list of their ten shared qualities to anyone seeking to become a school principal.
8. What about standards and standardized assessments would be necessary if we were not talking about processing such large numbers of individuals into the middle level principal's office? It is really part of the machine metaphor (Morgan, 1997), and not really part of the pursuit of deep exploration and individual development. If it were not for the problem of huge numbers, many more subtle and likely more thorough ways could be devised to assure deep levels of quality learning and demonstrations of that learning by middle level principals.
9. While arguments favoring compatibility in Proposition One did claim that joining ISLLC/SLLA would reduce the middle level's isolation, perhaps reducing turbulence, the evidence in Proposition Two shows that the cost of joining would be very high, including breaking with deeply held philosophical beliefs. The name of the middle level movement might survive, but its spirit would likely not.

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CHAPTER 10

VOICES FROM THE MIDDLE

Pre-service Preparation and Professional Development of Middle School Principals

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kathleen M. Brown
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

ABSTRACT

Few middle school principals have been formally prepared to work with young adolescents (grades 6–8). Fewer have received any formal preparation in the instructional and organizational needs of a middle school. This qualitative study focuses on middle school principals' perceptions of their pre-service preparation and professional development. The database for this research consisted of 98 surveys and 44 semi-structured interviews. Findings support the need for strengthening the pre-service preparation of aspiring principals and for improving and increasing the professional development opportunities for practicing middle school principals.

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"Almost all educational reform reports have come to the conclusion that the nation cannot attain excellence in education without effective school leadership" (Crawford, 1998, p. 8). We know that effective school leaders: (1) recognize teaching and learning as the main business of school, (2) communicate the school's mission and vision clearly and consistently to all constituents, (3) promote an atmosphere of trust and collaboration, and (4) emphasize professional development (see Bauck, 1987; George & Grebing, 1992; Weller, 1999). Emphasizing this renewed interest in the role of the principal, Olson (2000) noted:

> After years of work on structural changes, standards and testing and ways of holding students accountable, the education policy world had turned its attention to the people charged with making the system work.... But nowhere is the focus on the human element in public education more prevalent than in the renewed recognition of the importance of strong and effective leadership. (p. 1)

Despite the consensus that leadership counts, deep philosophical and political disagreements remain about what kind of educational leaders are needed, what knowledge and skills they should possess, and how they should be professionally prepared. This debate is particularly strong in the realm of middle level education, grades 6–8. It is exacerbated by the large corpus of research related to effective middle schools. Some of this research (see Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand, & Flowers, 1997) establishes powerful connections between fidelity to the middle school concept[1] and improved student academic performance and socio-emotional growth.

In short, if principals are to promote quality middle schools they must have a firm understanding of middle school philosophy, organizational structure, and instructional practices (Weller, 1999). In addition to dealing with instructional leadership, participatory management/leadership, school renewal planning and reporting, school-based budgeting and financial management, and a host of other issues, middle level principals must be knowledgeable about young adolescents and what components or structures (e.g., teaming, advisory, exploratories) have been deemed essential for the "good" middle school. Currently, few middle level principals are specifically prepared to work with young adolescents and most have not received any formal preparation in the instructional and organizational needs of a middle school. In 2002 Gaskill reported only seven states with special certification programs for middle level principals: Alaska, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Oklahoma. Only five of the seven states require the middle level credential. Currently, the trend seems to be leaning toward offering a K–12 administrative certification. As university courses are designed to address the needs of this wide audience, there is little hope that any of the levels of schooling (elementary, middle, and high) will receive the attention they need and deserve.

As a result of the recent indictments against middle schools (see Bradley, 1998) and the focus on middle school administrators, three major policy implications have emerged. These include: (1) strengthening the preservice preparation of aspiring principals by improving certification requirements and formal academic work, (2) improving the process of selecting principals, and (3) improving and increasing the professional development opportunities for practicing middle school principals. This article focuses on the first and third of these policy issues.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study presents the reader with empirical data from studies[1] on the middle level principalship conducted over the past three years (see Anfara, Brown, Mills, Mahar, & Hartman, 2000; and Brown, Anfara, Hartman, Mahar, & Mills, 2001). Research questions focused on: (1) the knowledge middle level principals need, (2) where that knowledge is obtained, and (3) how professional development should be delivered.

Data were collected using surveys and semi-structured interviews. Initially surveys were sent to 175 middle level principals in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and North Carolina. Ninety-eight surveys (56%) were returned and useable for analysis. This survey gathered information related to the principals' (1) educational, professional, and personal background; (2) knowledge of middle school philosophy; (3) experience with school reform and change; and (4) experiences with professional development. The survey contained both open and closed-ended questions. Responses, which were scaled, were then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Unscaled responses were clustered into themes or categories.

From the pool of survey respondents, 44 principals indicated that they were willing to be interviewed. Nineteen of the 44 principals work in schools recognized as "blue ribbon" schools by the U.S. Department of Education. While not exactly identical, it is important to note that the 44 interviewees were representative of the larger sample of survey respondents with regard to gender, age, race/ethnicity, administrative experience, the geographic location of their school, and the number of teachers on their faculty (see Appendix A for demographic information on these 44 principals. The semi-structured interviews allowed the 44 principals to expand on their survey responses, discuss more freely what it means to be a middle level principal, and to explain their understanding of middle level leadership.

The process of data analysis commenced with repeated readings of the interview transcripts and the compilation of survey data. Each researcher read and reread the data utilizing the constant comparative method to identify the repetitive refrains and persistent themes. Data were coded according to these themes. Attention was also focused on discrepant data and to making sense of the whole in terms of the context.

To help ensure the trustworthiness of our findings, we used triangulation of interviews and survey data, the presentation of verbatim quotes, multiple researchers, audit trails, and member checks. The following analysis, divided into the pre-service preparation and professional development of middle level principals, was "checked" by 12 of the 44 principals who were interviewed.

Pre-Service Preparation of Middle School Principals

The purpose of most educational administration programs is to produce school leaders with the knowledge, skills, and commitment to effectively lead and manage schools and to assure student success while increasing the level of academic expectations and performance for all students. But the efficacy of graduate preparation in educational administration is relatively unstudied. In 1997, Haller, Brent, and McNamara noted that "overall, our reading of the limited literature on this subject suggests that there is little evidence that graduate training increases the effective of school managers" (p. 224).

According to the candid remarks of the middle school principals in our research (see Anfara, Brown, Mills, Mahar, & Hartman, 2000), formal college/university coursework was not perceived to be a major influence in their acquisition of essential skills. Many middle school principals described their programs as inadequate, impractical and unrealistic. Several commented about the disconnection between what they were taught and what they needed to know in the world of practice.

Again, I don't think a whole lot of time or effort was spent on the personal side of understanding what's involved in being a principal and dealing with people. It was a lot of theory and not a whole lot of practical application.

Again, I'm not certain about certification. I don't know how much you really learn from courses, you'll forgive me…I have two masters degrees in education, one's in curriculum and instruction and one is in instructional leadership, and I'm not really certain how much one learns from being in a the classroom, reading all the research.

I think people need to get out and need the opportunity to see what the job's about, maybe a little more job shadowing…Sit and talk about what middle school principals do and observe what they do in their building. When I was in training there wasn't any of that...they need to get in and see what the job's all about.

According to Scales (1992), preparation that enables prospective middle level educators to "understand early adolescent development but not to be responsive to it" (p. 65) is futile. The middle school principals interviewed in the Anfara et al. study (2000) admitted that their preparation programs did not address the distinct nature of young adolescence nor discuss the concept of "developmental appropriateness" as it applies to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the organization of the middle school (e.g., flexible scheduling, teaming of teachers, advisory periods, exploratory curriculum, etc.). Typical comments included:

> I went through my entire college training program for administration and did not even hear the words "middle school philosophy." I started as a middle school principal and had no idea what exploratory curriculum was, what advisories were, and how to organize teachers into effective, functioning teams.
>
> Soon after I became a middle school principal I went to NMSA's conference and I kept hearing the phrase "developmentally appropriate." I had no idea what that meant. I wish I had studied early adolescent psychology and understood the nature of the students at my school.
>
> Nothing I studied in my preparation program prepared me to work in a middle school. Luckily I was an assistant principal under a principal who had read and studied the middle school concept.

When practicing middle school principals were asked what to do about this situation, they responded in a very clear fashion.

> Well, first of all, they (middle level principals) have to have their own program. Right now you can be a middle school principal with an elementary certificate or a secondary principal certificate and so especially tailored administrative training at the college/university level should be the number one priority.
>
> Administrative preparation programs are doing us a tremendous disservice by training us in the same classes as elementary and secondary principals. Yes, there are some skills and knowledge that are the same across all three levels, but running a middle school is different. There is so much to learn about the middle school philosophy. There should be separate courses—at least a few that focus on the distinct nature of the different levels of schooling.
>
> I think principal training programs need to include courses that are cotaught by a university professor and a practicing principal. Every course

> needs to include fieldwork. Pre-service administrators need to get into schools, at every grade level, early on in their formal training.

Interestingly enough, the middle school principals that participated in the Anfara et al. study (2000) were not willing to go as far as calling for specific middle level administrative certification. In contrast, results from a national survey conducted by DeMedio and Mazur-Stewart (1990) regarding teacher's and principal's attitudes toward middle grade certification "support the belief that those preparing to *teach* middle grade students need special middle grade preparation and appropriate middle grade certification" (p. 70).

The reform literature (*Turning Points*, Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989; and *This We Believe*, NMSA, 1982, revised 1995) advocates that effective middle school principals support and promote the establishment of structures that address the developmental needs of young adolescents, such as advisory programs, exploratory programs, teaming of teachers, flexible scheduling, thematic units and transition programs. Although approximately 80% of the principals surveyed are currently implementing at least five of the six structures (see Appendix B) mentioned, only 59% have had *some* professional preparation in *some* of the areas. The unfortunate reality, as one respondent so bluntly stated, is "you kind of learn by practice at this level." Others concurred:

> Certainly the training I got did not really address or get into middle school issues at all.

> The hardest thing I learned on the job was that I needed to learn more. I knew that when I got here and started to work with middle school kids that if I was going to be a success at all this, I needed to learn what the kids were all about, and it focused my learning better. I just needed to know what middle school kids were all about, and what techniques worked with them. So I began to focus my learning on that area.

But there's no specific training for the middle school principal. And a lot of it is on the job experience. So therefore, I think if they had middle level certification with the appropriate courses and background, I think they (principals) would be stronger for this particular group of youngsters.

> I don't know that, uh, being an administrator per say is good enough training to jump into middle school. There really needs to be pre-curricular activities or courses to let you understand the things you learn on the job. Uh, I think it's very difficult to learn unless you're immersed in it. So in some way you have to see the model in action. I think to read a book or to take a course in it and not be involved in it is very difficult.

Results of the Anfara et al. study (2000) indicated that middle level principals are seeking better preparation and professional development specifically geared for middle level service. They are requesting pre-service administrative preparation dedicated to the novel concept of structuring educational programs to meet the unique developmental needs of young adolescents (ages 10–15). They are searching for opportunities to learn about themselves and their particular leadership styles. In so doing, they offer two major pre-service suggestions for institutions of higher education: (1) train middle level leaders together in a supportive cohort fashion, and (2) provide real, meaningful middle school internships for prospective administrators. Advocating for a cohort model, one principal commented,

> I'd like to see middle level principals trained together...to be able to relate the problems and look at what have been solutions in other schools, and one of the pieces that would be helpful for me would be to meet with principals in a similar sized district.

On the subject on internships, three principals noted:

> I think they should have to do an intern period...in a middle school. I really think that you can't learn this job from a book, you have to be in the job, and nobody really understands that until they've spent some time seeing the job.

> I think people need to get out and need the opportunity to see what the job's about, maybe a little more job shadowing. Spend time, sit and talk, observe. When I was in training there wasn't any of that. Pre-service principals need to have time to observe what's going on in a school, to get a feel for what the principals does. Maybe have some kind of a program where the pre-service people can ask principals questions. But they need to get into the schools and see what the job is all about.

> Well, I think that, um, a practicum would be good. I think maybe middle school principals, people, men and women inspired...should be exposed to how it is done. ...I existed as a middle school principal that long because of the level of the kids. I think that there should be a part of the year devoted to on-the-job training, shadowing, and watching these kids in action. I would say that certain shadowing or a practicum with a good middle school principal would be highly suggested.

Even novice principals see these two pre-service suggestions as important in that "many of the things needed to be effective as a principal cannot be taught in any course...they're not something that anybody can teach you in an administrative course." Then, once they are working as principals, the middle school principals who were studied suggested that professional associations take a more active role in providing valuable professional growth opportunities.

Professional Development of Middle School Principals

As noted earlier, school principals are deemed essential to current school reform, yet the rhetoric about their importance is often unaccompanied by sufficient attention either to what knowledge and skills they need or how they will learn what is needed to effectively lead a school community. Issues related to the professional development of school administrators are rooted in preparation programs that have been criticized in recent years (see Murphy, 1992). Unfortunately, the professional development of administrators, in general, and middle school principals, specifically, is reported to be in even worse shape that the initial preparation programs (Hallinger & Murphy, 1991).

Securing an administrative certificate by completing a graduate degree has often been viewed as the end of formal training with subsequent professional development being somewhat hit or miss. If today's middle school principals want to be truly effective and escape the ever-present danger of professional obsolescence, they must regularly participate in appropriate professional development. Daresh and Playko (1992) admit, "it takes hard work to learn the art, science, and craft of educational administration, and it takes a similar amount of hard work to keep the needed leadership skills well tuned over time" (p. xi).

A review of the literature reveals that the professional development of school administrators has been described as "a wasteland," "meager," "neglected," "poverty stricken," "one of the worst slums," and "deplorable." This characterization takes on added importance when we take into account what Olivero (1982) noted. "Of all educators, principals may have greater needs for renewal than anyone else. For better or ill, the bulk of educational improvement rests on the shoulders of the principal, the very person who has been neglected for so long" (p. 341). Based on the interview data in the Brown et al. study (2001) middle school principals do not believe that their school districts and professional organizations provide the necessary opportunities for them to learn what they need to know to forward reform at the school and classroom level. Most of the principals who were interviewed noted that the professional development opportunities are "too scattered and do not tell you how to get from point A to point B."

As Neufeld (1997) points out, the work of school leaders is becoming "more ambitious and more ambiguous. What counts as good curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment is distinctly different than what counted as good 10 years ago" (p. 490). A principal with twelve years administrative experience verified that "this job has changed tremendously in the last fifteen, twenty years." This is important to keep in mind considering the fact that 79% of the principals who participated in both the Anfara et al. (2000) and Brown et al. studies (2001) were professionally prepared in the 1970s and/ or 1980s. Roles and relationships between teachers and principals and between schools and central offices have changed tremendously with respect to power and authority (Gainey, 1994; Murphy, 1994; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992).

In the Brown et al. study (2001) we asked middle level principals to talk with us about their professional development opportunities. Specifically we focused the conversations on *what* they wanted to know, *where* they wanted to learn it, and *how* they would learn it best. In response to what they wanted to know, the middle level principals noted the need for additional knowledge and skills in: (1) creating respectful, collaborative, and collegial school culture; (2) understanding, implementing, and assessing newly proposed approaches to teaching and learning; (3) remaining up-to-date with the legal, financial, and technological issues related to their schools; and, (4) understanding the nature of the young adolescent and the meaning of the phrase "developmentally appropriate." Each of the following quotes, representing these four issues, is typical of what the middle school principals told us:

Collaborative School Culture

> We need some realistic leadership qualities like the ability to utilize power in a constructive way...like being able to accurately assess the culture and climate of a building and the political ramifications that impact it.... The ability to understand the environment (political and community) of how your school is operating and to be able to deal with other constituencies and be proactive in decision making and problem solving. We need to learn how to reach out and create collaborative partnerships with businesses, communities, families, universities, and to find funding through grants. Lastly, we need to understand what it means to collaborate with teachers and staff and share the decision making in the school.

New Approaches to Learning

> I think we need constant staff development on the latest instructional skills—cooperative learning, looping, strategies in dealing with kids with different discipline issues, IEPs, and differentiated instruction. These would be high on my list for professional development for administrators. I started as principal here and had no idea what thematic units were or how teaming of teachers worked. I had only heard briefly about flexible scheduling. I had the hardest time trying to figure out how I would evaluate teachers who were teaming—I had not learned the skills.

Legal, Financial, and Technology Issues

> I would like to feel like I know what's going on with the legal and financial issues. There is just too much to do and too much to know and stay current with. There is not enough time in a day to accomplish it all. Also, while everyone is touting the wonderful aspects of technology it is driving me crazy—trying to stay on top of equipment that gets outdated or broken.

Nature of Young Adolescence

> We need more information on the psychology of the middle school student...on teaming, scheduling, patience, and understanding the needs of this type of student. We need more information about the middle school philosophy and its connection to improved student performance. I had not idea what the term "developmentally appropriate" meant and had no idea that it would change the very nature of the curriculum, teaching, and evaluation of students and teachers.

These principals are learning to lead middle schools that often challenge existing ideas about school organization, teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment. To do so, they find themselves needing new strategies and skills to forward the reforms and effectiveness of their schools.

In response to where professional development occurs, Barth (1985) contended that professional development for principals can be characterized as a "wasteland." "Principals take assorted courses at universities, attend episodic in-service activities within their school systems, and struggle to elevate professional literature to the top of the pile of papers on their desks. Many attend, few succumb, fewer learn" (p. 156). Consequently, district and national in-services and university coursework have left many middle school principals unsatisfied and unprepared. The principals in the Brown et al. study (2001) reported a lack of professional development opportunities at the district, state, and national levels:

> Does inservice training for middle level principals exist in this district? No!
>
> Improving the training of middle level principals—that usually doesn't happen. There's an assumption that's wrong. The assumption is that because principals hold administrative positions, they already know what they need to know, so districts don't bother to professionally develop them. The districts have been very helpful in developing programs for teachers, but there is very little, if anything, for administrators. I'm not getting to interact with other middle school administrators, locally or regionally.

Since none of the principals in the Brown et al. study (2001) held middle level administrative certification, they asked for special attention to the middle school philosophy and its implementation in their schools. They asked for district sponsored in-services and for the necessary incentives for them to pursue the professional development through graduate coursework and active participation in state, regional, and national, middle level association-sponsored programs.

By taking advantage of going to conferences, getting new ideas to implement, reading their publications (if you have time). I go to hear people talk about how they handle situations similar to mine. We need more regional conferences...more principals could go if the conferences were closer in proximity. Local conferences are easier to get to and not as expensive as opposed to national conferences that are difficult to get to and expensive.

It's important to belong to professional organizations. They keep me abreast of what's going on in the field, the latest research being done. The articles are timely and very helpful, helping to keep me in touch with the middle school philosophy. The organizations also give me a network. I wish we did more locally; like get together with other middle school principals. We could form a middle level consortium and develop our own agenda about what we need to improve ourselves.

Having addressed the *what* and *where* questions, middle school principals spoke about *how* they learn best. Based on the data provided in the interviews and surveys, four characteristics were identified. Professional development should involve the practicing principal in: (1) the identification of needs and planning; (2) time for reflection within the school context and sharing with other colleagues; (3) systematic and sustained professional development supported by district time, money and resources; and (4) the selection of competent instructors who employ practical, adult learning processes. The following quotes present typical responses related to each of these characteristics.

> Instead of attending mandated seminars, ask administrators what they needs and want, as opposed to the useless seminars we have to attend. The people who create these inservices should identify the areas that need improvement and then discuss these issues with the principals.

> It's good to hear that other people have the same problems I do...colleague interaction is good. Also, reflecting on what we do. We really need the time to reflect. The camaraderie and spirit of being with people who do the same thing I do is great. You need the support of a critical group of friends, people you can call, share ideas with, solve problems and things like that.

> National organizations can't know what each school district needs. That's a local concern that school districts ought to take ownership of. The districts need to make sure that the professional development opportunities are planned and sharply focused on one or two topics. Currently, the profes-

> sional development is like going to a cafeteria—there is no connection between or among any of the sessions.
>
> How to do this, how to do that...instead of telling me how to do it, I would like to have the experience myself. Somebody reading a book to me doesn't work. I would like to see a lot more hands-on activities at the inservices. What is done at these sessions needs to be connected to the real world of middle schools.

Administrators want to understand school leadership as an idea *and* as a set of practices. Personal and professional updates are needed. Organizations and associations need to increase the frequency and accuracy of their training for administrators presently serving in middle schools. While 70% of the principals surveyed belong to NASSP and 60% to ASCD, only 37% were members of NMSA, the leading national organization for middle level educators. There seems to be a disconnect between principals and the organization geared specifically to the middle level. Middle school principals reported that:

> And you have a wide range of students from "A to Z" with different abilities. That's a difficult nut to crack. And you combine that with the fact that we're in an urban setting. A lot of schools that you go to when you're at the middle school conferences, the presenters, the ideal middle schools...that's suburbia. That's the wealthy part of the cities, or that's suburbia. It's not even rural for the most part. ...they do not have the wide range of kids to deal with.
>
> Again, we have been through lots of different stages here. The truth is that there is really nothing new in all of this. We happened to attend the National Middle School Conference in Colorado, and they were celebrating the 30th anniversary of middle school reform. It was interesting, because they were revisiting everything that we already do. And for me, it was a confirmation for what I have internalized my professional life. It was reaffirming, but also, not disturbing but kind of interesting of how we strayed away, and now we need to come back.

In the same breath, many of the participants in the Brown et al. study (2001) recognized the importance of the conferences, presentations and association offerings and testify to this fact. They speak about needing further knowledge and skill in the meaning and practice of leadership, in creating a beneficial school culture, in understanding the newly proposed approaches to teaching and learning, and in assessing progress toward school improvement plans. They want to grow in their understanding of themselves and their leadership styles.

They look to their professional organizations to help them develop a greater sense of efficacy, a sense that they are capable of learning, improving, and gaining insights. They would like to see national, regional and state middle level associations consider collaborative efforts in establishing approved programs that would meet both administrative standards while simultaneously addressing relevant and practical learning opportunities.

> What I started to do as an administrator was I focused my in-service training on leadership. I took a lot of in-service training on leadership, and then almost everything I did was focused on middle school. I attended anything that was sponsored by the National Middle School Association. Anything sponsored by ASCD, specific to middle level education...I bugged the living daylights out of the *Turning Points* people. They were a tremendous guide along the way.
>
> Number one, I think the districts that do not let the principals out, neither one year nor two years, to attend National conferences are not staying current. They're doing their principals a major disservice. I think conferences are very, very important. Um, certainly school districts should allow that to happen.
>
> Um, I think, um, there should be a requirement to go to conferences. Like the state level middle school conference. And they should look at best practices and relate them to the models we use in our buildings.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

If, indeed educational excellence is inextricably linked to effective school leadership, there is much to be gained from studying the experiences of school leaders as they relate to pre-service preparation and in-service professional development. More specifically, given the virtual absence of research specific to middle level principals, we need more research that gives us insights into these individuals as they live out their professional lives in schools. The administrators, in both of the studies cited in this article, shared with us their views, their hopes, and their frustrations. From what they told us in relation to their preparation programs and professional development opportunities, we offer Table 10.1 to demonstrate the needed changes in the preparation of middle school principals.

Issues related to the preparation of aspiring principals have become more multifaceted and situations have become even more complex. School leaders now need to be visionaries, constructivists, facilitators, participatory instructors, culture builders, and advocates, among a host of other qualities not commonly described in traditional educational administration textbooks or taught in graduate courses.

As we noted earlier the primary purpose of professional development for school administrators is to increase professional and personal effectiveness while simultaneously increasing organizational effectiveness. For middle school principals this purpose is even more urgent in light of the context in which they work and the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be essential for creating effective middle schools (see Figure 10.1).

Table 10.1. The Evolution of Middle Level Principal Preparation Programs

Generalized Components of current preparation programs *20th century* [FROM]	*Recommended practices to prepare middle level leaders* *21st century* [TO]
Generally no distinction among preparation for elementary, middle level and secondary principalship	Preparation programs with specific courses focused on the middle level and its uniqueness: extended middle level internships/field experiences
Early adolescence as a developmental period viewed as not important to the development of programs, curriculum, or instruction	"Developmental appropriateness" used as a template in the development of all components and functioning of a middle school
Recognizes content as a need and curriculum as "what is"	Understands and applies the components of flexible/block scheduling, integrated curriculum, advisory programs, small learning communities, team teaching, etc.; Aware of the need to address both cognitive and affective domains of the learner
Uncoupling of administration from teaching and learning	Reconnecting administration to teaching and learning
Pre-service principals "trained" to be aware of trends in education and to respond to needs	Establishes the principal as a life-long learner; emphasizes the central role that in-services and professional organizations provide; emphasizes the importance of the principal as "risk-taker"
Trained to manage and efficiently administer a school	Prepares principal to be collaborative in one's approach to leading; to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty
Maintenance of organizational infrastructure	Development of human resources
Excellence is a "state of being"	Excellence is a "state of becoming"

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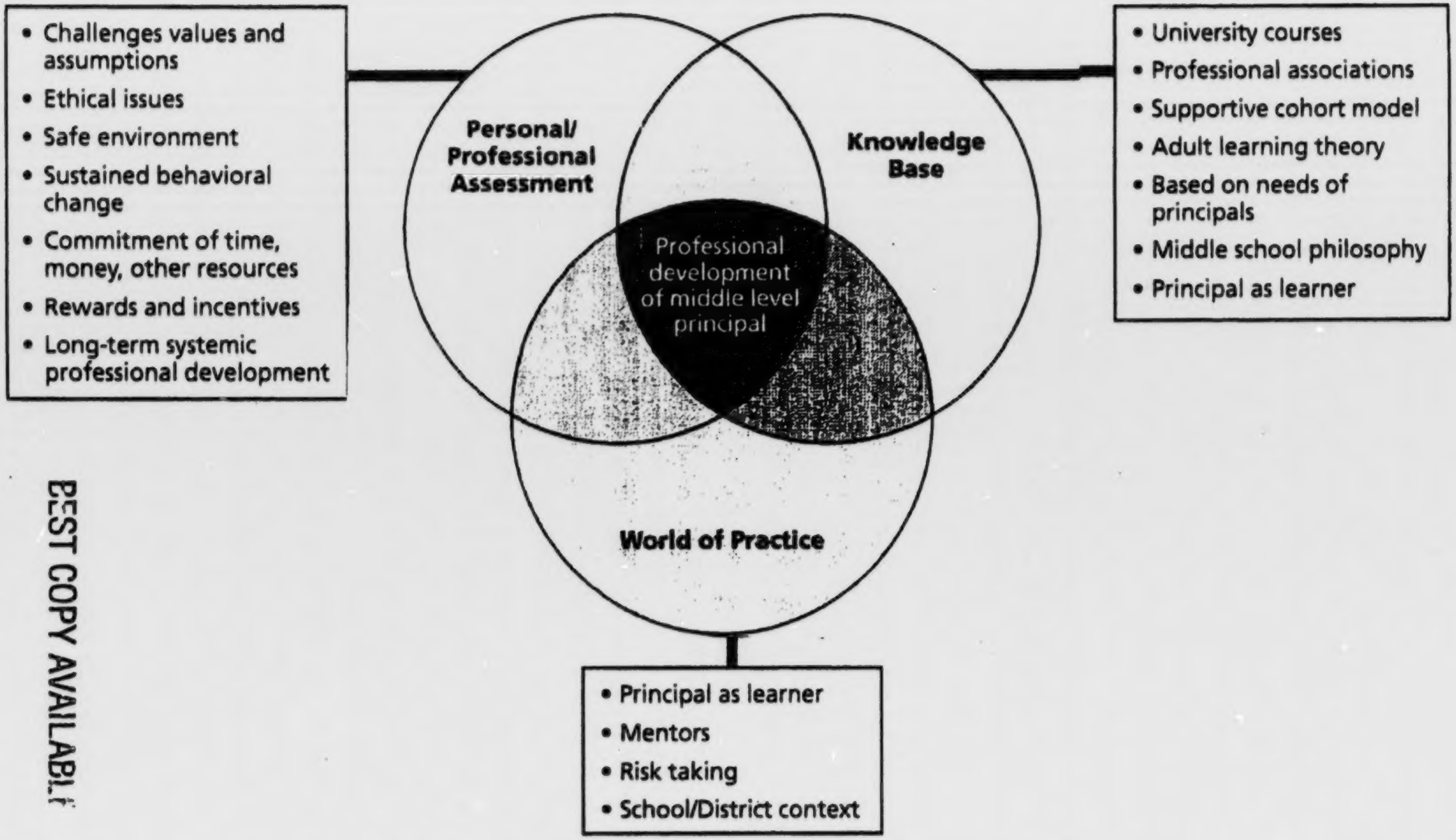
• Challenges values and assumptions
• Ethical issues
• Safe environment
• Sustained behavioral change
• Commitment of time, money, other resources
• Rewards and incentives
• Long-term systemic professional development
Personal/ Professional Assessment
Knowledge Base
Professional development of middle level principal
World of Practice
• University courses
• Professional associations
• Supportive cohort model
• Adult learning theory
• Based on needs of principals
• Middle school philosophy
• Principal as learner
• Principal as learner
• Mentors
• Risk taking
• School/District context

Figure 10.1. An illustration of the influences upon professional development of middle level principals.

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In reference to the professional development of middle level principals, what we found through interviews is amazingly consistent with the principles of effective professional development as documented in the literature. According to this literature (Hutson, 1981; Lawrence, 1974; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Neufeld, 1997), effective professional development for school administrators: (1) is directed towards local school needs; (2) involves the participants in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs; (3) is based on the participants' needs; (4) utilizes active rather than passive learning techniques; (5) is part of long-term, systematic staff development; (6) provides evidence of quality control; (7) enables participants to share ideas and give assistance to one another; (8) makes rewards and incentives, both intrinsic and extrinsic, evident to program participants; and (9) incorporates the practice of mentoring principals at their school sites.

We must continue to discuss and explore issues surrounding the pre-service preparation and professional development of middle school principals. In the current climate of accountability and standards (see ISLLC standards) for administrators, we must not forget that the future administrators we prepare will be working in a *context,* be that elementary, middle, or high. The challenges we face in our middle schools are great. Unless we confront the issues highlighted in this chapter, we cannot expect the current indictments of a "less than rigorous curriculum" and "poor student academic performance" to disappear. Middle school reform will remain rhetoric with the only change being the name above the schoolhouse door.[2]

NOTES

1. *Turning Points* (1989) and *This We Believe* (1982, 1995) characterize the exemplary middle school as including the following principles: (1) teaching a core academic curriculum, (2) reengaging families in the education of young adolescents, (3) improving academic performance through fostering health and fitness, (4) connecting schools to the community, (5) creating small communities for learning, (6) empowering teachers and administrators, (7) staffing middle schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and (8) ensuring the success of ALL students. These principles are implemented through such structures as advisory programs, interdisciplinary teaming of teachers, exploratory curricula, transition programs, and flexible scheduling of the school day. Collectively these principles constitute what is referred to as middle school philosophy and/or the middle school concept.
2. The studies, cited in this chapter, utilized a qualitative, case study design. Ninety-eight surveys and forty-four semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Descriptive quantitative data were collected on both the sample of principals and the schools they represented. For a more complete description of the methods and a fuller analysis, see Anfara et al. (2000) and Brown et al. (2001).

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APPENDIX A
Portrait of Participating Middle Level Principals (n=98)

Race/Ethnicity	• White 76 (78%) • Black 9 (9%) • Hispanic 1 (1%) • Not Reported 12 (12%)
Gender	• Male 76 (78%) • Female 22 (22%)
Age	Range = 28–65 years Mean = 48 years
Highest Degree	• MA/MS 31 (43%) • MEd 27 (34%) • EdD 18 (23%) • PhD 3 (3%) • BSEd 1 (1%)
Year of degree	1960s 3 (3%) 1970s 36 (37%) 1980s 42 (43%) 1990s 17 (17%)
Certification	• Secondary 60% • Elementary 26% • K–12 14%
Teaching Experience	Range = 2.5–25 years Mean = 13 years
Prior Administrative Experience	• Assistant Principal 68 (70%) • Administrative Experience 13 (13%) • Curriculum Specialist 8 (8%) • No Prior Administrative Experience 9 (9%)
Administrative Experience (in years)	Range = 1–31 years Mean = 9 years Mode = 1 year (11 respondents)
Tenure for Middle School appointment	• 1–3 Years: 21 (21%) • 4–5 Years: 45 (45%) • 6–10 Years: 20 (20%) • 10+ Years: 15 (14%)
Formal Middle School training	No 58 (59%) Yes 40 (41%)
Membership in professional organizations	• NASSP 65 (66%) • ASCD 55 (56%) • NMSA 35 (36%) • STATE MSA 20 (20%) • PDK 18 (18%)

APPENDIX B
Middle School Demographics (n = 98)

School Location	Suburban 68 (70%)	Urban 19 (19%)	Rural 11 (11%)	
Grade Configuration	6–8 63 (65%)	5–8 15 (15%)	7–8 9 (9%)	7–9 11 (11%)
Type of School	Public 98 (100%)	Private 0 (0%)	Other 0 (0%)	
Middle school programs implemented	• Teaming 86 (88%) • Interdisciplinary Teaching 81 (83%) • Transition Programs 74 (76%) • Exploratory Curriculum 72 (73%) • Block/Flexible Scheduling 58 (59%) • Advisory 38 (39%)			

CHAPTER 11

SUPPORT FOR NEW AND EXPERIENCED MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPALS

A Proposed Model for Professional Development

Vicki Nord Petzko
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

ABSTRACT

This chapter proposes a model for the professional support and development of middle level principals, focusing on what the literature identifies as appropriate strategies as well as the recommended content. The model emanates from a belief that support for new as well as experienced middle level principals must be focused on on-going assessment, highly individualized, and closely tied to the improvement of student achievement. The need for such a model is based on the unparalleled challenges and accountability issues middle level principals will face in the 21st century as well as the potentially disabling number of administrative retirements and principal shortages anticipated in the next five years. The need is also validated through research

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that indicates that many current principals have little or no academic background or professional training in issues specific to middle level schools, and that a number of these principals have never taught or been an assistant principal in a middle level school. Effective professional support systems will be essential to the retention efforts of new principals, as well as critical for the enhancement of persons already in the field.

INTRODUCTION

In *Turning Points 2000*, the claim is made that no single individual is more important to initiating and sustaining improvement in middle grades school students' performance than the school principal (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 157). Yet a recent study of middle level principals showed that 62% plan to leave their current position within the next five years (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2002). Understandably, there is a clear and repetitive call in various educational contexts for the "recruitment and retention" of the next generation of school principals. Programs that focus on the identification and recruitment of these potential leaders are beginning to emerge in the professional literature. The issue that remains relatively unaddressed, however, is how to support and further develop those individuals who rise to the challenge of becoming a new principal, or who continue to embrace the rigors of their current principalship. Once they are in a position as principal or assistant principal in a middle level school, what kind of professional and personal support do they need? What strategies and programs have been effective in the past, and what is recommended for the future? The purpose of this chapter is to explore the alternatives for such support and development as well as to recommend essential elements of future models.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPALS

Personal Characteristics

The recent *National Study of Leadership in Middle Level Schools (NSLMLS)* provided a comprehensive description of the characteristics of middle level principals at the beginning of the 21st century (Valentine et al., 2002). This study was the third in a series of "decade studies" conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, & Melton, 1993; Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, & Keefe, 1981). Unique to the most recent study was that principals of *all* middle level schools in the United States were invited to participate. Data collection was completed by means of a web-based survey, and over 1,400 principals completed the questionnaire during the spring and summer months of 2000. Consistent with the previous studies, middle level schools were defined as those serving young adolescents in any structural combination of grades five through nine.

The vast majority of principals in the 2002 study were white males, age 50 or older, with less than 10 years experience as a principal. The percent of women had increased to 27%, compared to 4% in 1965, and the percent of ethnic minorities (8%) had remained stable during the same period of time. Principals in this study were older than their counterparts had been in the previous studies; 50% were 50 years of age or older, compared to a range of 34% to 37% in the previous studies. Although principals in this study were older than in the previous studies, they had considerably less experience in the principalship than did principals in 1993 and 1981. Thirty percent (30%) of the principals in the 2002 study had one to three years experience, compared to 19% in 1993 and 22% in 1981. Only 34% of the participants in the most recent survey had 10 or more years of experience as a principal, compared to 44% and 47% in previous studies. The data regarding years as a *middle level* principal presented a profile of even less experience. Only 23% of the respondents claim 10 or more years experience as a middle level principal, 38% had 1–3 years experience, and 38% showed 4–9 years (Valentine et al., 2002, pp. 21–39).

Many of these principals came to the position with little or no administrative background or expertise at the middle level. The *NSLMLS* (2002) revealed that 45% had never served as a middle school assistant principal and 23% of the respondent principals had no experience as an assistant principal at any level; 12% had been middle level teachers immediately prior to their appointment as a principal, and 9% came to the middle level principalship directly from an elementary or high school classroom. Twenty percent had no non-administrative experience at the middle level prior to becoming a principal. The administrative licensure of responding principals also was not specific to the middle level principalship. The largest group of respondents (46%) held K–12 licensure. The next largest group held secondary licensure (39%), followed by 7% elementary, and 4% middle level licensure (Valentine et al., 2002, pp. 30–36).

The snapshot of the workweek of the middle level principal as portrayed by the *NSLMLS* was indicative of the intense demands of the position. Forty-eight percent of the respondents reported working 60 or more hours a week and only 6% reported that they worked less than 49 hours a week. When asked how they spent their time and how they should spend their time, principals indicated that they spent the most time on school management, personnel, student activities, and student behavior, however, they believed they should spend their time on program development, personnel, planning, and school management (Valentine et al., 2002, pp. 60–61).

Academic Preparation

Almost two-thirds of the principals (62%) in the *NSLMLS* (2002) study held a master's degree in Educational Administration and Supervision, 18% held a master's degree in Secondary Education or Curriculum and Instruction. Only 6% held a master's degree in Middle Level Education. Most of the respondents had continued their graduate education beyond the master's level: 11% held a doctorate, 10% had completed all coursework toward the doctorate, 17% held an educational specialist degree, and 40% characterized their post master's work as "a master's degree plus." Only 11% of these advanced degrees were in Middle Level Education (Valentine et al., 2002, pp. 28–29).

When the principals in the national sample of 1400 middle level schools were compared to those in the 98 schools identified as "highly successful schools," several noteworthy similarities and differences were identified (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, Lucas, & Petzko, in press). Although there was little difference in the administrative licensure of the two groups (K–12, 7–12, K–8, or middle grades), approximately twice as many principals of highly successful schools had majored in Middle Level Education at the master's, specialist or doctoral level than had their national sample counterparts. Whereas most of the principals in the national sample had no advanced preparation that specifically addressed middle level concepts, this was not the case with principals in highly successful schools. The largest number of national sample principals (37%) indicated that they had not taken any graduate classes that explicitly focused on middle level issues; 34% had taken one or two such courses and only 20% had taken three to five courses. In comparison, 34% of the principals of highly successful schools had taken three to five courses specific to education at the middle level, and another 20% had taken six or more such courses.

This analysis of the academic preparation of middle level principals demonstrates cause for concern, and may be even more disquieting in light of the waves of criticism frequently directed at these graduate programs. Murphy (2001) claimed that some critics have attacked preparation programs for focusing on the research and academic dimensions of the profession to the near exclusion of actual practice. Others have lambasted programs for ignoring the ethical and moral dimensions of the job, and still others have assailed programs for a focus on management issues. A 1988 survey of preparation programs (Heller, Conway, & Jacobson, 1998) found that 51% of 1,123 respondents rated their graduate training as only fair or poor. Forty-six percent said that the programs were not sufficiently rigorous, and 60% identified "on the job training" as the most significant element of their preparation. Results from the *NSLMLS* yielded supportive data: 85% of the respondents identified "work as an assistant principal" as having "great" value in their professional development, while only 40% rated "university coursework" at that level and only 29% identified their "university field experiences" as of great value (Valentine et al., 2002, p 40).

Other research, focusing on principals from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, corroborated much of the previously mentioned work (Anfara, Brown, Mills, Hartman, & Mahar, 2001). In a study of 72 middle level principals, 63% had five or fewer years of experience as a middle level principal, and 54% reported they had no formal middle school training. Similar to the Valentine (2002) results, interviewees for this study also did not place a high value on their academic preparation: many described their preparation programs as inadequate, impractical, unrealistic, and lacking reflective practice (p. 202). Principals in the Anfara et al. (2001) study also saw a need for distinction regarding middle level concepts; 80% of the respondents were currently implementing at least five of the six practices known to address the developmental needs of early adolescents, however, only 46% reported that they had some training in some of those practices. One participant summarized the lack of specific preparation by stating, "Certainly the training that I got did not address or get into middle school issues at all" (Anfara et al., p. 204).

The portrait drawn of current middle level principals leaves little doubt that their role and the circumstances of their positions are increasingly and unequivocally demanding. In addition, it is evident that many current middle level principals consider their academic preparation less than satisfactory, and many have not been specifically prepared for the position they now hold. Most spend long hours on the job, and as the needs of the students continue to escalate so does the principal's accountability. Yet these principals clearly reflected the leadership quality of a "...bedrock belief that what they were doing was good and important and eminently worthwhile" (Goldberg, 2001, p. 758). A large majority (82%) of respondents in the *NSLMLS* (2002) stated they would "definitely" or "probably" choose the job again (p. 52). The principals in the Anfara et al. (2001) study also expressed enjoyment in working with young adolescents and a positive attitude toward the challenges of serving as the principal of a middle level school (p. 192). These examples of dedication and this level of commitment are vital to the continuous improvement of middle level schools. Consequently, it is essential that appropriate preparation and professional support programs are in place to fuel this passion and to nurture and continually energize the current and future leaders of middle level schools.

A PROPOSED MODEL OF SUPPORT FOR NEW AND EXPERIENCED PRINCIPALS

The model proposed for the support and professional development of new as well as experienced principals is shown in Figure 11.1. It is a continuous improvement concept, grounded in an on-going assessment of the individual's knowledge, skills, and expertise. The expectation is that content is specific to individualized assessment, and that strategies for delivery include some combination of mentoring, networking, and reflective practice. Although the content and the specific delivery strategies would evolve over time, the processes for professional support and development would occur at each stage of the principal's career development.

Career Stages of the Principalship

The expectation for the continuous training for principals was established in the monograph *Developing School Leaders: A Call for Collaboration* (NASSP, 1992), where it was argued that professional development for principals should be a "seamless garment" that extends through pre-service, induction, career changes, and retirement. Daresh and Playko (1992) concurred with this premise, stating that training should not be fragmented but should occur throughout the career of the principal. It is evi-

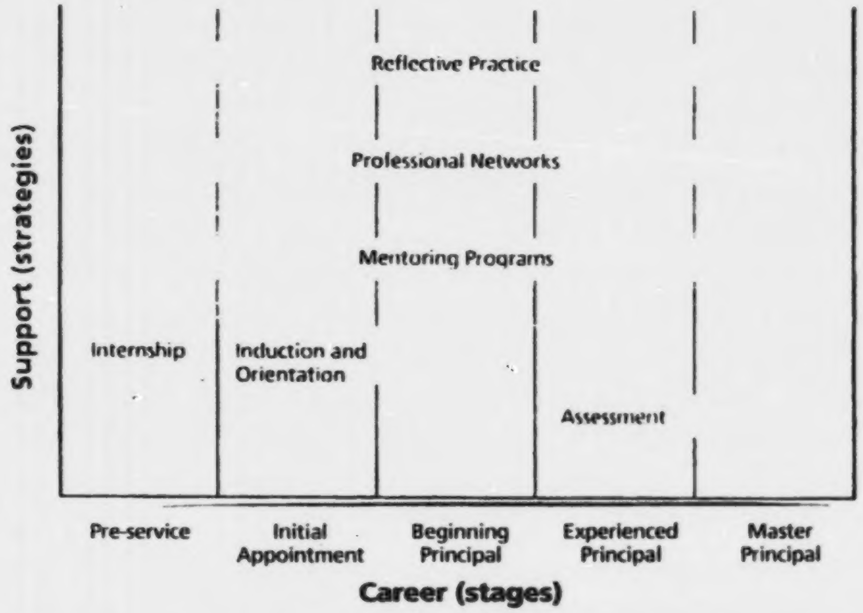
Reflective Practice
Professional Networks
Mentoring Programs
Internship
Induction and Orientation
Assessment
Support (strategies)
Pre-service
Initial Appointment
Beginning Principal
Experienced Principal
Master Principal
Career (stages)

Figure 11.1. A model for the support and professional development of new and experienced principals.

dent that principals need continuous opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and skills not only as the needs of their schools change but also as the art and science of school leadership continue to unfold. Fundamental to the model in Figure 11.1 is the assessment of the individual and the unique strengths, experiences, naivete, and needs that she or he brings to the position at each stage of career development.

There is however, no well-developed understanding of the career stages of the position (Peterson, 2001). Asserting that the stages are not separated by clear indicators of advancement, nor are they defined by specific events or ceremonies, Peterson suggested that the progression through the stages may often unfold more as a spiral than a sequence, and that a principal may be a master leader with regard to some issues and a novice with regards to others. "One size fits all" development programs, even those that attempt to differentiate program substance based on career stages, are likely to be acknowledged as "...neither effective nor efficient" (Lauder, 2000, p. 24).

Assessment

A recent position statement by the NASSP asserted that "leadership development must be tied to meaningful assessment of leadership skills" (2003b). As suggested in Figure 11.1, this assessment would not only occur in the pre-service or entry level stages of the principal's career, but would be an on-going and critical component at all stages of career development. Assessment is fundamental to any system of comprehensive professional support: it will determine the basis for goal setting, the essence of how each principal's skills and knowledge will evolve, the strategies for support at all stages of his or her tenure, and the substance of the content for each individual.

The assessment of an individual's specific skill set can be addressed in a number of ways, through formal or informal procedures, and introspective or externally driven critique mechanisms. Several sets of standards have been developed by professional organizations that can be used for such analyses.

The *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium: Standards for School Leaders (ISLLC Standards)* were developed through a collaborative effort of the National Policy Board on Educational Administration, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CSSO), and representatives of over 20 states and several professional organizations (CSSO, 1996). The ISLLC Standards address six general areas: vision, instructional leadership, management, working with the community, ethics, and legal/political issues. A formal or informal assessment of a principal's strengths and weaknesses can be determined through the use of the ISLLC indicators of knowledge, skills, performances, and dispositions in each standard area, thus forming a basis for professional development goals.

The National Policy Board on Educational Administration's *21 Domains for Principal Performance* can also be used to assist principals in conducting self-assessments and developing distinctive growth plans. The knowledge and skill areas identified in the *21 Domains* can be analyzed according to strengths and weaknesses, and subsequently used as a basis for goal setting and professional development (Thompson, 1993).

Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001) offers yet another set of professional standards that are focused on improving schools. Authors describe the guide as one to help principals reflect upon, and thus improve, their practice. They assert: "We didn't create this guide to be used by policy makers for assessment. It is a resource for principals to help them improve their work and their schools" (p. 7).

A self-assessment developed by the NASSP, *The 21st Century Administrator Skills Self-Assessment and Observer Assessment* is also aligned with the ISLLC Standards and is appropriate for entry-level as well as mid-career principals (NASSP, 2003c). Designed primarily as a tool for reflective analysis, this instrument is still another excellent resource to assist in the development of a personalized professional development plan that is based on the specific strengths and weaknesses of an individual and the unique aspects of her/his school.

Assessment of an individual's skills can also occur through a formalized evaluation or assessment procedure. The NASSP has developed several programs, known as "Assessment Centers," which are appropriate for various stages in the careers of principals. One such assessment center, *Selecting and Developing the 21st Century Principal*, is designed not only to measure the leadership potential of aspiring principals but to identify developmental needs of entry level principals as well. Another, the *Developmental Assessment Center*, focuses on more experienced principals and promotes the development of a personal plan for career advancement. While these are not designed as self-assessment instruments, they are examples of additional and well respected procedures by which the skills, knowledge, strengths, and weaknesses of a principal can be evaluated and subsequently tied to a personalized plan for professional development (NASSP, 2003a).

Another extensive assessment program that has proved successful is the *Management Profile*, developed at the Texas A&M University Principals' Center (Erlandson, Atkinson, & Wilmore, 1994). Wilmore (1995) described the procedure as constructed around an assessment of a videotaped interview of a principal responding to open-ended questions. Results are compiled using a three-tiered matrix of leadership functions, roles, and task areas, and are presented in a confidential report to the principal. This report is then used to develop a professional development plan unique to each person's specific circumstances and needs. "Principals are encouraged to use their strengths to overcome their weaknesses over a three year period" (p. 95).

Several studies have looked at what experienced leaders perceive as important in principal development programs; the comprehensive assessment procedures suggested in Figure 11.1 would address these points as well. In the *NSLMLS*, principals were asked what content areas were most important in the preparation of middle level principals (Valentine et al., 2002). Supervision and evaluation of staff were identified by the national sample of principals as the most essential competencies to be addressed, followed by interpersonal skills and relationships, instructional leadership, and oral/written communication skills (p. 31). When principals of highly successful schools were asked the same question in a later study, corresponding priorities were identified, however, middle level best practices (11th in the national sample) took over the highest priority position (Valentine et al., in press).

Anfara's (2001) study of middle level principals in New Jersey and Pennsylvania provided similar data. Participants in that study also recommended that pre-service programs in educational administration recognize and address the distinctive characteristics of the middle school. It was suggested that content focus on the understanding and application of developmentally appropriate practices, such as flexible/block scheduling, integrated curriculum, advisory programs, learning communities, and team teaching. Additionally, the social/emotional needs of students at the middle level, and the ability to engage in collaborative leadership were enumerated as important for leaders of the future (p. 210).

In a study that analyzed the needs of first year principals, participants were asked to list areas where they felt their needs were the greatest (Elsberry, 1996). New elementary principals identified their top five needs as the following: goal setting and planning, instruction and curriculum development, policy guidelines and legal mandates, time management, conflict management, school finance, and business management (p. 33).

The differences in perceived needs and identification of roadblocks as reported by new and experienced principals were reported by Spradling (1989) as well as Bogotch and Riedlinger (1993). In a follow up to a 1988 NASSP study of new and experienced high school principals, Spradling identified several discrepancies in the reported needs and concerns of the two groups. New high school principals worked longer hours than did their veteran comparison group. They spent more time than they would have chosen on planning, student affairs, and program development and less time than they would have preferred on their own professional development. Spradling also recorded some dispute between new and veteran principals with regard to roadblocks to their successful performance; new principals identified difficulties with student activities, the physical plant, community pressure, teacher turnover, and incompetence of office staff as much larger roadblocks than did their experienced counterparts. New principals were also more disturbed by athletic booster groups and less disturbed by political extremist groups than were experienced principals. Overall, Spradling's research identified 14 areas that "loom larger to new principals," including effective and efficient use of time, insufficient and inadequate communication with central office, insufficient participation in the budget process, and insufficient participation in personnel selection (pp. 70–71).

In a comparison study of new and experienced principals in a large, Southern, urban school district, Bogotch and Riedlinger's (1993) research revealed intriguing similarities as well as differences to the results of the Spradling (1989) study. For example, where Spradling's multi-district research demonstrated that most aspects of the principalship were more troublesome to new principals than to experienced principals, the results from Bogotch and Riedlinger's single district study determined that experienced principals were more troubled. While they cautioned that this might be idiosyncratic to that particular school system, and that the results of their study could not be generalized, they did conclude, however, that principal induction and professional development must place emphasis on district-centered research, district programs, and solutions.

Spradling (1989) characterized the assessment element of the professional development process as the evolution of a plan, a "blueprint to follow," based on specific knowledge of the problems and attitudes the individual brings to the job (p. 72). The significance of individualized assessment is heightened by documented differences in the perceived needs of new as opposed to experienced principals, as well as by the numerous professional development priorities identified by principals in several research studies. The requirement for individualized assessment is consistent with the adult learning theory principles promoted by the National Staff Development Council (1995), specifically, its contention that adults will commit best to learning that they see as relevant to their day-to-day performance and important for their personal and professional needs.

The process described in Figure 11.1 clarifies that assessment is a defining element of professional development in each career stage and throughout the professional life of a principal. What is critical is not the exact nature of the assessment but that it occurs on a regular basis, that the criteria used for assessment are relevant to the principal's job, and that the assessment is conducted for purposes of formative, not summative appraisal. When combined with an overview of the school improvement plan and an appraisal of performance areas in which leadership will be critical for enhanced student achievement, assessment will be the key to meaningful professional development practices.

STRATEGIES AND SYSTEMS: THE PROCESSES OF PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPALS

As the content and substance of professional support and development programs evolve through on-going assessment, the strategies for delivery must facilitate individualized goal setting and must be consistent with what is known about how adults learn. The *Standards for Staff Development* (National Staff Development Council (NSDC), 2001) charge that professional development must take place within a delivery system that is supportive of adult learning theory. The adult learner must be actively involved in the process and activities and new knowledge must be tied to prior learning. Whatever the delivery strategy or the exact program used, there is little disagreement that the approach must be job embedded and on-going in order to be consistent with the NSDC standards and effective in the support and development of school principals.

It is unfortunate, however, that these procedures have not become readily accepted practices in professional development programs. In a study of a cross section of 140 experienced school principals, Ricciardi (1997) found that not only was "lecture" rated by participants as the least effective delivery method, it was the primary delivery method for training of school principals. In *A New Vision for Staff Development*, Sparks and Hirsch (1997) stated that "too much of what passes as staff development is "sit and get," in which educators are expected to be the passive recipients of wisdom, without provision for follow-up and coaching (p. 14). DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggested that the opposite should be the case, that learning be so deeply embedded in the daily work of the individual educator that it would be difficult to distinguish between where the work ends and where the learning begins.

Thus the support strategies suggested in Figure 11.1 are based on the assumption that the most powerful learning is that which occurs in response to challenges currently being faced by the principal and that allows for immediate application and feedback. If the content is linked to the authentic problems of practice of the principal, if she or he is expected to apply the new knowledge and skills in a timely manner, and if she/he is then is involved in a process of feedback to assess and improve her/his performance, then the criteria for "on going and job embedded learning" will have been met. Various kinds of strategies can be used, including induction procedures, mentoring programs, and networking opportunities.

Induction Programs

Testimonials regarding principal induction programs reveal a history of neglect or, at best, minimal implementation. Sosne (1982) recounted one principal's all too typical experience from twenty years ago: "When he appointed me, the superintendent gave me the keys to the school, a city map to help me find the building, and wished me good luck" (p. 14). Almost fifteen years later, Elsberry and Bishop (1996) described the same and still common practice through the words of another new principal: "I came into a 612 student school with a faculty and staff of 65-plus people with no prior training and no help. 'Sink or swim' was the attitude at the central office" (p. 32). Where induction programs for new teachers became widely implemented in the 1990s, similar programs for new principals were not the norm. Recent research, however, identifies strategies and practices that should be included as part of an initial orientation and induction agenda.

Following a study of first year elementary school principals in Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina, Elsberry (1993) concluded that it was critical to allow beginning principals an orientation period that was long enough to assess various aspects of school programs and operations as well as to develop productive working relationships with staff, students, and parents. The first year principals in this study identified induction practices they considered most effective. Foremost on the list were summer induction conferences prior to the beginning of the academic year, where the beginning principal could learn about the job and its specifics without the stress of the daily operation of the school. Principals in Elsberry's study described the next most effective practice as mentoring, and emphasized the importance of information regarding district procedures and expectations as well as the unwritten rules and traditions of its culture. Paradoxically, only 31% of the respondents in this study had participated in a summer induction program, and only 21% were the beneficiary of working with a mentor principal. Consistent with the Ricciardi (1997) study, the most frequently used induction practices, inservice workshops and professional association meetings, were also ranked as low in effectiveness. Elsberry's conclusions included a call for comprehensive induction programs that were a top priority for the district, stating that without such systems, even the best new principals would travel a long and difficult path before reaching their full potential.

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring can be defined in several ways. The term has its derivation in Homer's *Odyssey*, where before departing for Troy, Ulysses asked his sage friend, Mentor, to care for his son. Mentor, who served as a guardian and a guide to the prince during Ulysses' 20-year absence, was then credited with helping the young prince comprehend and accept the challenges that he faced in the future. Douglas (1997) defined mentoring as an intense relationship in which a senior person oversees the career development and psychosocial development of a less experienced person. Craig (1996) emphasized the mentor's role in imparting the norms, values, and mores that are specific to the organization. Hopkins-Thompson (2000) more broadly defined mentors as those who "...support the being of the protégés, providing advocacy, counseling, support and protection-feedback and information they would otherwise not have" (p. 30). Regardless of variations in the definitions, there is general agreement that effective mentoring programs have several critical attributes. Crucial to program effectiveness are a selection and training process for the mentors, a system to pair the mentor and the protégé, the opportunity for on-going interaction, and a separation of the role of mentor from the role of evaluator/supervisor.

The selection of persons to become mentors is of vital importance to any successful mentoring program. Despite the fact that in a study of elementary school principals, over 90% indicated a willingness to serve in that capacity (Shelton, 1991), it is not necessarily true that all principals are suited to the role, or even that all great principals make great mentors. Caution and an objective selection process are critical; criteria must be carefully considered and scrupulously applied. Hopkins-Thompson (2000) argued that determining who should serve in such roles should not be an exercise in calculation of longevity, rather that "careful consideration must be given to those who have the disposition and the skills to do the job" (p. 31). Walker and Scott (1994) suggested a potential detrimental effect if mentors are not carefully selected: "If mentors are selected for reasons other than their ability to communicate knowledge and experience, or their professional skills and competence, there is a risk of encouraging and reinforcing practices that may be less than effective" (p. 73). Criteria for mentors in the New Administrators Program at the University of California Santa Cruz illustrate the skill set typically suggested: the mentor must have a high level of coaching competency, must possess substantial success as a site administrator, and must be available for on-going feedback and constructive criticism (Bloom, 1999).

In *Mentor Programs: Focus on the Beginning Principal*, Daresh and Playko (1990) provided a detailed set of characteristics for mentors. The following is a summary of their recommendations:

- Mentors should have experience as practicing and effective school administrators. They do not, however, need to be in the identical role as the protégé, nor do they need extensive experience as an administrator. Protégés should be able to learn from the best, not simply those who are available.
- Mentors must demonstrate general qualities of intelligence, good communication skills, decisiveness, clarity of vision, well developed interpersonal skills, and the ability to accept multiple solutions to complex problems.
- Mentors must be able to ask the right questions. They need to stimulate independence, not just provide answers.
- Mentors must be able to accept another way of doing things. Regardless of past levels of effectiveness, "the way I used to do it" may not be the only, or the best, solution.
- Mentors must exhibit awareness of the political and social realities of at least one school system, and must be able to help the protégé understand how to survive within those realities.
- Mentors must not only be willing to accept but be ready to applaud a protégé who can excel beyond the mentor's level of performance. She or he must be able to celebrate the protégés superior accomplishment (excerpted from pp. 74–77).

Once mentors are selected, it is crucial that they are appropriately matched with protégés. At the Texas A & M Principals Center, it was suggested that principals have some input into who their mentor/coach would be, recognizing that it is "imperative that the mentor/coach be someone with whom the new principal feels comfortable and secure" (Wilmore, 1995, p. 93). Bloom (1999) concurred, stating that "Effective coaching/mentoring relationships are highly individual. As might be expected, each (mentor) relationship was different, driven by participant need, trust level, and other particulars" (p. 17). Although in many programs these pairings are done, at least in part, by the protégé actually selecting the mentor, some programs also use learning style assessments, interest inventories, or personality profiles, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory, Keirsey-Bates Temperament Type, or True Colors. Fundamental to the success of any pairing is that the individuals have the ability to "connect" and the potential for trust in the relationship. What is undisputed is that the mentor must be someone the protégé respects, trusts, and with whom she/he can relax if a successful mentoring relationship is to develop. As summarized by one principal in the Hopkins-Thompson (2000) study, "There must be a good match between the mentor and the protégé for the process to be successful" (p. 32).

Training and development are also essential to effective mentor systems. The success of a mentoring program depends not only on the knowledge and expertise of the mentor, but also on her/his clear understanding of the role and its expectations, her/his communication and feedback skills, and sensitivity to the politics as well as the formal as well as unwritten agendas of the school district. Walker and Scott (1994) emphasized that mentors must not only know how to clearly set expectations, particularly in the areas of working with teachers, fitting into the school culture, and the use of resources, but that they must also examine processes such as role modeling and providing feedback. In a qualitative analysis of the Minnesota L.E.A.D. Program, an administrative mentoring program designed to help beginning principals, six pairs of mentors and protégés were interviewed in various school districts (Monsour, 1998). The first recommendation to emerge as a result of these interviews was that mentors must be trained in adult development as well as in the mentoring process. Hopkins-Thompson (2000) recommended skills to be addressed as those of observation, communication, critique, and feedback. She also asserted that mentors must be able to help protégés understand and respond to the norms, values, and expectations of the organization, and that training should include use and analysis of assessment instruments, the development of professional growth plans, and the implementation of reflective processes.

Successful mentoring programs also share the core belief that it is important and necessary for mentors and protégés to have frequent and on-going contact with each other. Claiming that administrative mentoring programs help reduce the sense of isolation as well as close the gap between pre-service training and the actualities of administration, Monsour's (1998) research identified successful mentoring relationships as those in which the pairs met at least on a monthly basis and/or had frequent telephone contacts. Strong relationships were characterized as those where mentors were readily available, accessible, and demonstrated a sense of commitment to the process. Monsour recommended site visits by the mentor to the protégé's workplace, a close geographic proximity to facilitate communication, and a one-year contract to demonstrate commitment to a mentoring program. In addition, her recommendations called for a two-day block of time to be provided at the beginning of the program for mentors and protégés to establish their relationship, as well as monthly half-day workshops through the year, focusing on topics emerging from ongoing needs assessments. Other suggestions for frequent and on-going contact included mentors and protégés meeting with other pairs in small groups so that the protégé could gain information from more than one mentor. Monsour concluded that administrative mentoring programs are important for the profession, the protégé, and the mentor as well.

Various other arrangements for interactions between mentors and protégés are also recommended: Hopkins-Thompson (2000) suggested fewer meetings and more technology-enhanced interaction, such as email and on-line discussion forums; Kaye and Jacobsen (1995) indicated that mentors could be assigned to groups of protégés so that interpersonal and team skills would be developed simultaneously as they were learning from the experiences of others. What is critical is the commitment to the process as well as to each other. Both mentors and protégés must invest time and energy in the process, as well as take the initiative to interact on an ongoing basis in order for any mentoring arrangement to enjoy success.

A final but defining point of agreement in the research and literature on mentoring programs is that the mentor role should not be coupled with the role of supervisor or evaluator (Gil, 1998; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Monsour, 1998). The success of mentoring is grounded, at least in part, in trust and open communication, which may not be consistent with the roles and expectations present in a supervisor/subordinate relationship. Protégés need to be able to share deficiencies, admit to areas where they lack confidence, and confide in their mentors with regard to professional as well as emotional needs. The assessments that take place should be of a formative nature as opposed to the judgment of the protégé's competence. Individual growth plans developed with the mentor should be confidential, encouraging the protégé to admit to inadequacies and allowing the mentor to guide, coach, and "cheerlead." Summative evaluations are best reserved for the supervisor, and should take place outside of the mentor/protégé relationship. Disciplinary processes should never fall under the umbrella of a mentoring program, unless the protégé requests that the mentor participate as a resource or an advocate. If the roles of mentor and supervisor are combined, "both the protégé, who may be reluctant to ask for help in weak areas, and the mentor, who has to use the information in the evaluative process, share the difficulty..." (Hopkins-Thompson, p. 36).

Benefits of Mentoring for Beginning as Well as Experienced Principals

That the benefits of a mentoring program can be substantial for a new principal are seldom disputed. One program that represents such benefits is the New Administrator Program (NAP) at the University of California Santa Cruz (Bloom, 1999). Based on their model of induction for new teachers, the NAP included one-to-one mentoring and a structured program of support for the first two years of professional practice. The benefits to new administrators as reported by Bloom were numerous: Mentors were commended for their assistance as they observed and coached new administrators through authentic situations; they were lauded as resource providers as they helped new administrators identify consultants and access research; they were trusted and appreciated as sounding boards for the new principals. Bloom quoted participants with the following affirmations: "This program has been essential to my coping with the isolation and with the spotlight." "It was good to have an outside, neutral person who could listen and give me a thumbs up or a thumbs down and give me new ideas." "This kind of third party objective feedback is essential to the first year principal because it is often the only source of such feedback. By attending staff and school site meetings he was able to point out verbal and management miscues" (p. 16). Bloom concluded his analysis of the NAP by stating that the cost of such programs was insignificant when compared to the "...real costs of failed leadership to school districts, staff members, and students" (p. 17).

The model proposed in Figure 11.1, however, stipulates that mentoring occur not only at the entry phase of a school administrators career, bùt throughout the career stages of the principalship. This premise is, in fact, well supported: Although often associated with entry-level principals, the effectiveness of mentoring is not limited to that level of the career ladder. Daresh and Playko (1989) maintained that mentoring is a beneficial form of professional development for both the mentor and the person being mentored. They stated, "mentoring may be a particularly potent activity during the first years of a new career ...it may also be viewed as something that can happen throughout a professional lifetime" (p. 2). Stating that "even champions need coaches," Hopkins-Thompson (2000) asserted that even those who move from one level to another or are new to a district after significant experience elsewhere need a mentor and a support system to experience success (p. 34). Malone (2001) summarized this perspective by stating, "Mentor relationships need not be limited to the early stages of a principal's training. Even established school leaders can benefit from a mentor when trying to navigate the particularly difficult problems that all principals encounter" (p. 5).

Research on mentoring schemes has also indicated that there is reciprocity in mentoring relationships due to the reality that both parties may enjoy certain benefits. While protégés gain skills, knowledge, confidence, and political awareness, mentors enjoy the satisfaction of knowing that they have positively influenced the career of another. "The process also provides mentors the opportunity to sharpen their own skills and thinking. Through protégé probing and questioning...mentors are moved to redefine, clarify, and perhaps question their own actions" (Walker & Scott, 1994, p. 74). Other research has documented advantages for the person who chooses to be a mentor. Principals surveyed in Mississippi and North Carolina praised the benefits of being a mentor, suggesting that mentoring not only lead them to a greater understanding of who they were but also improved their skills. "An experienced mentor can improve their own performance by working with new principals...mentoring caused me to reflect on my own skills and sharpen(ed) my skills" (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000, p. 30). Perhaps even more significant in this study were the comments that the process increased the mentor's status and self esteem and "...made me push harder in reaching my goals for teachers and students in my own school" (Hopkins-Thompson, p. 30).

While the need for mentoring programs appears to be widely promoted in the literature, it cannot be assumed that such opportunities are universally available in practice. A study of elementary school principals reported that although 80% of the principals who had mentors found them to be very helpful, only 31% of the respondents in that study actually had mentors (Shelton, 1991). Although Monsour (1998) maintained that formal mentoring programs had increased considerably during the 1990s, in a later study of middle level principals, 10% of the respondents indicated that "no one" had been "most influential" in their first years on the job (Valentine et al., 2002, p. 51). As 50% of the middle level principals in that study indicated an intent to leave their positions within the next three to five years, as school districts search for new leadership, and as the challenges for a principal continue to increase while the call for accountability escalates, mentor programs will fill an increasingly important role in the development of and professional support for the next generation of school leaders.

Professional Networks

The term "professional networks" can suggest sophisticated and formal linkages of persons engaged for personal gain, such as climbing a corporate ladder; it can also suggest an unpretentious and rather informal association of peers who are linked through different settings for purposes of professional discourse and sharing on an on-going basis. Such is the case for principals. The report of the elementary and secondary principals' associations, *The Principal: Keystone of a Highly Effective School* called for increased formal and informal opportunities for networking among new principals, as well as between experienced and aspiring principals for purposes of professional growth (Educational Research Service, 2000). Skrla (2001) specified peer networking to be one of the most effective sparks for professional growth, asserting that it can lead to reflection, questioning, and problem solving. A study of the first-year career transition issues of new principals identified a clear need for new principals to build a new system of support with other administrators (Ginty, 1995). Ginty recommended that professional development programs "promote peer interaction and collegiality among beginning administrators…(recognizing) a strong desire to come together periodically to share common problems, gain peer support, and acquire additional insights from colleagues" (p. 40). Critical to the concept is that the network consists of individuals with common concerns who meet on an on-going basis with some element of structure to their setting.

Several examples of effective network systems are described in the literature, ranging from those conducted on a national scope to those within a single school district. The Principals' Leadership Network (PLN), a regional program of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, in partnership with the Education Alliance at Brown University, draws members from New England, New York, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The PLN addresses the leadership challenges encountered by K–12 principals and facilitates the exploration of solutions to those leadership challenges through both face-to-face and distance communication methods. The PLN draws from the expertise of principals from a broad region to address skills needed in school improvement (National Association of Elementary School Principals & The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2003). The Texas Mentor School Network (2003) also joins schools and principals into cohort groups of like educational levels (elementary, middle, and high school) and provides opportunities for participants to network across a state and focus on research based school improvement initiatives. Principal institutes and academies, such as the Instructional Leadership Institute at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (Petzko, 2002) and the Chicago Leadership Initiative for Transformation (Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, 2003) operate more localized networks. These regional or local programs link principals from various school systems or schools into cohort groups; they meet over an extended period of time and focus on common professional growth concerns as well as the school improvement issues facing each principal.

Another form of networking is that of "peer evaluation," where principals are organized into groups charged with providing formative evaluation and feedback on a regular and an on-going basis. One such program is the Chula Vista (CA) Elementary School District's Principal Peer Evaluation Program, established to "promote professional growth and personal growth and development" (Gil, 2001, p. 23). Both new and experienced principals in this district participated in the process: new principals were evaluated annually for a three-year probationary period, and veteran principals were evaluated on a two-year rotation. The district established performance indicators and principals participated in a goal setting process with their peer group. Peer groups engaged in classroom observations, formal interviews with parents and staff members, and analysis of student work. They participated in regular meetings in order to assess strengths and weaknesses, provide timely and honest feedback, and identify areas for improvement. Critical to the plan was that the peer evaluators did not perform a supervisory function; if an individual required a remediation plan based on a disciplinary intervention, it was done through the superintendent and assistant superintendents.

Following two years of program implementation, principals in Chula Vista were asked to evaluate the process (Gil, 1998). In general, the peer evaluation program enjoyed considerable praise from both new and veteran principals. Respondents valued the trust that was developed through frequent and candid conversations. They reported that they gained from diverse perspectives and varied expertise, stated that they appreciated the opportunity to brainstorm solutions, and valued support for dealing with difficult issues. Weakness of the program included a lack of time to meet, lack of consistency in expectations, and an unwillingness to offer criticism. The program was credited with "...providing an effective structure for continuous principal support, allowing the superintendent and assistant superintendent to focus on the individual with the greatest needs" (p. 30).

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform has designed a study group protocol for any such network of school leaders, suggesting that groups of 6–15 participants will be most successful, and that either outside facilitators or designated peer facilitators should be utilized to enhance effective implementation (Mohr, 1998). What is essential is not the exact content or format of the peer network, but rather the commonality of interest, the commitment to on-going participation, and the willingness of a member or outside facilitator to convene the meetings and set the agendas. "Whatever the common ground that unites the members of the network, networks can be a valuable source of support" (Skrla et al., 2001, p.124).

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is suggested repeatedly in the literature as a method to support change, foster professional growth, and enhance school reform (Clark & Clark, 2002; Osterman, 1998; Schon, 1987). Schon (1987) suggested that reflective practice could cause principals to better address ill-defined problems and rethink them in different ways. Osterman (1998) advocated for reflective practice as a primary means for changing the behavior of a principal through thorough analysis of that person's beliefs and actions, leading to new understandings and new strategies. Clark and Clark (2002) called for a process of inquiry and reflection about programs and practices that will ultimately enhance learning. Calling on the principal to step back, to analyze, to reconceptualize, and then to design better strategies are fundamental to the concept of reflective practice and serve as an important means of professional support and development for school leaders (Osterman & Kottcamp, 1993).

Reflective practice can be incorporated into professional development in any number of ways. The use of journals, on-line chat rooms, small group discussion forums, or daily reflection prompts can all be effective in the stimulation of the procedure. The reflective processes force the individual to critique and analyze the assumptions upon which an action was taken, challenge those assumptions, evaluate the action taken as well as its results, and design alternatives.

Reflective practice thus is a logical and meaningful strategy to be incorporated into all aspects of the professional development of school principals, including any induction program, mentoring system, or network opportunity. In addition to the benefits of private reflective practices, the benefits of engaging in this process with a mentor or in a group may be enormous. It is highly likely that the principal might be asked more difficult questions that she/he would ask of her/himself, multiple perspectives and insights could be involved, and the collaborative design of an alternative may yield a far superior result.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In its proposal for an advanced certification system for school administrators, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2001) stated the following:

> ...once in the possession of a license administrators typically find themselves at the end of any organized effort to build their capacity to serve as educational leaders. Unlike the common practice of the corporate world and the military...education makes no such careful investment of resources in its future leaders. Rather, it typically sends a signal to its freshly minted novice managers that once assigned their first administrative position serious attention to their professional development has concluded....the notion that there are higher standards to which they might aspire, that there are greater levels of competence and professionalism that they might work toward, or that they are just at the beginning, not at the end of their development as leaders are foreign concepts to school administration. (p. 4)

The national outcry for school improvement, the anticipated retirement rate of current principals, and the lack of confidence and efficacy in principal preparation programs demand that this culture be changed. The capacity to improve schools depends on the quality and effectiveness of the leadership in each school. If it is, in fact, true that no single individual is more important to initiating and sustaining improvement in middle grades school students' performance than the school principal (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 157) then there is no alternative but to invest resources in those principals. It is critical that these individuals have the opportunity and the expectation to participate in effective professional support and development programs throughout their tenure as middle school principals.

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CHAPTER 12

DEVELOPING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Lessons from School Self-Assessment

Pritha Gopalan and Alexandra T. Weinbaum
Academy for Educational Development

ABSTRACT

This chapter reports on the changing roles of middle-level administrators and teachers as a result of their participation in School Self-Assessment (SSA), a program of professional development in inquiry-based school improvement. Professional development for administrators is rarely integrated with that of teachers. Yet, diverse competencies need to come together in order for school staff to meet the call for whole-school improvement. This chapter showcases three profiles of school leaders—a staff coordinator, a principal, and a teacher—to make the case for integrating the ongoing professional development of middle-level administrators and teachers to develop truly distributed leadership in schools.

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INTRODUCTION

The School Self-Assessment project was established by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in 1996 to support school improvement in high-poverty Michigan schools with middle grades through schoolwide, sustained inquiry into teaching and learning. The project's principles and main activities are based on research that emphasizes the importance of a school's ownership of its learning goals for students, and of the need to develop professional community among staff to continuously assess how well the school is achieving these goals. It is also based on a long history in the United Kingdom that provides evidence for the usefulness to schools of external peers, trained in processes of school review, in helping a school identify and build on its strengths and bridge the gap between where it wants to be and where it currently is (Wilson, 1996).

The School Self-Assessment (SSA) project offers a sequence of professional development institutes to help schools develop knowledge and skills in schoolwide goal-setting and the ongoing collection and analysis of evidence (including student work samples and observations of classrooms) of schools' progress toward their goals for students. SSA additionally helps schools prepare for and participate in an "external review," conducted by peers from other SSA schools, that provides the school with an objective perspective (through a written report) on where it is vis-à-vis its goals for students. SSA also guides schools in conducting follow-up to the external review, including addressing areas for future action identified in the report written by the external review team. Finally, SSA schools also are part of a statewide SSA professional development network and participate in advanced institutes that support their ongoing efforts to meet their goals.

A study of a cohort of six SSA schools from 1997 to 2002 by researchers at the Academy for Educational Development (Gopalan, Weinbaum & Tice, 2000) shows that schools that fully implemented SSA made significant improvements in their teaching and learning environment, including increased student achievement on standardized tests. The majority of schools demonstrated improvements in standardized reading scores and matched or outperformed district and state averages for proficiency in writing. They reported adopting varied approaches to instruction to address students' learning styles. Administrators and teachers alike attested to SSA's profound impact on their thinking, leadership and approach to teaching. About half the schools also reported greater staff engagement in school improvement planning and implementation, in comparison with the period before their involvement in SSA.

SSA is implemented within schools by core teams that participate in professional development and disseminate their learning within the school.

The core team is a leadership team, composed of administrators, staff, and in some cases, parents and community members. This chapter illustrates the importance of shared or "distributed" leadership (Elmore, 2000) and connects the capacity for distributed leadership to instructional leadership promoting improved student learning.

This chapter has two main sections: a review of literature on emerging approaches to leadership development, highlighting the need for an integrated approach to leadership development and outlining key areas that leadership programs should pay attention to; and profiles of emerging leaders in three schools participating in SSA. These profiles illustrate some of the varied forms that leadership can take in schools and point to the benefits and limitations of emerging forms of leadership. The chapter concludes with a call for greater integration of professional development programs for middle-level principals and teachers, arguing that school improvement requires the leadership of several school stakeholders.

A Note on Methods

This chapter is based on a five-year qualitative study (Gopalan, Weinbaum & Tice, 2000) of 15 SSA schools with middle grades in Michigan, including in-depth qualitative case studies of six SSA schools. All participating schools served low-income communities in rural and urban locations. The study was conducted by AED from fall 1997 to spring 2002 with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The study design consisted of longitudinal interviews with SSA organizers, administrators, teachers, parents and students from SSA schools; observations of school events, classrooms, and professional development institutes; and a review of site documents, such as minutes from school goal-setting meetings, review preparation materials, and post-review meetings. In compliance with our agreement with participating schools, all school and participant names have been changed.

The three profiles of Paula King a staff coordinator, Karen Moore a principal, and Rose Smith a teacher, presented in this chapter are drawn from data collected from Beech Elementary/Middle, Hope Elementary/Middle and Lexington Middle, three of the six schools participating in the case studies. We interviewed Paula, Karen and Rose either in person or over the telephone one to three times every year, and observed school and professional development events in which they participated two to four times every year. To write the profiles, we also reviewed each school's goals, its report from the external review, and other documents generated by each SSA team as part of its school improvement efforts.

Emerging Research on Leadership Development

Research on the expertise needed to conceptualize, manage, and sustain school improvement emphasizes that the nature of this expertise is influenced by changes in the current educational reform environment. The call for whole-school improvement and higher educational standards has called into question traditional and "romantic" (Elmore, 2000) ideas of leadership, such as transformational or visionary leadership. At this time, there is widespread acknowledgement that educational reform is slow, difficult, complex, and connected to larger politico-cultural forces (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Fullan, 1998; Sarason, 1996; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Research and development efforts by educational reformers seeking comprehensive approaches to address long-standing educational problems identify leadership development as a key component of effective schools (National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, 2000).

The main themes emerging from the literature review are as follows:

- In the context of whole-school reform, school leaders require varied forms of political, cultural, and technical expertise in order to guide educational efforts effectively (House & McQuillan, 1998).
- Leadership is more effectively achieved by cohesive teams with varied expertise and roles within schools (Elmore, 2000). The work of within-school leadership teams is strengthened by long-term partnerships with external educational partners (National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, 2000).
- It is important for professional communities (Lieberman, 1996) that develop within schools, such as leadership teams, to establish norms for interaction and action (Sarason, 1996).

Contemporary interpretations of leadership and leadership development are integrally tied to advances in the practice and study of school improvement. As school improvement continues to be conceptualized in increasingly comprehensive and democratic ways, there is less emphasis on transformational leadership (Elmore, 2000; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 1999; van den Berg, Vandenberghen & Sleegers, 1999). Educational reform approaches increasingly stress school-community relationships and parent involvement as key aspects of meaningful school improvement (AED, 1998; National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, 2000; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002), along with a continuing emphasis on curriculum, instruction, and school reorganization. Leadership development, in this context, must address the growing needs of educators, both administrators and teachers, to define and effectively execute their emerging roles. Part of the emerging role is to address the political and institutional factors that increasingly play a role in school effectiveness, especially as school improvement efforts have shifted from a focus on single innovations as catalysts of improvement to whole-school reform approaches. House and McQuillan (1998), for example, note that political, technical, and cultural expertise is essential for meaningful school improvement. Within this framework effective leaders must develop a varied range of competencies and partnerships in order to foster meaningful and sustainable improvement in their schools. Elmore's (2000) concept of "distributed leadership" speaks to the need for integrating a wide range of competencies to address the needs of school improvement. He writes:

> In any organized system, people typically specialize, or develop particular competencies, that are related to their predispositions, interests, aptitudes, and prior knowledge, skills, and specialized roles. Furthermore, competency varies considerably among people in similar roles. . . . In a knowledge-intensive enterprise like teaching and learning, there is no way to perform these complex tasks without widely distributing the responsibility for leadership among roles in the organization, and without working hard at creating a common culture, or set of values, symbols, and rituals, that make this distributed leadership coherent. (p. 15)

Elmore (2000) also emphasizes that distributed leadership must focus primarily on instructional improvement: "Leadership is the guidance and improvement of instruction. . . .The skills and knowledge that matter in leadership, under this definition, are those that can be connected to, or lead directly to the improvement of instruction and student performance" (pp. 14–15). Switching the leadership focus from "the man in the principal's office," (a 1973 ethnography of the principalship by Harry Wolcott), recent research has shown that it is highly advantageous to develop different levels and kinds of leadership within schools. A study of the role of teacher leaders in school improvement (Leask & Terrell, 1997) positions them as "middle managers" of schools and suggests that the important instructional and political role played by teacher leaders should be augmented by leadership development, which intentionally builds their expertise in instruction, management, and planning for school improvement. Partnerships between schools and external organizations with expertise in school improvement are also increasingly influencing school leadership (AED, 1998; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002). The recent No Child Left Behind legislation specifically endorses comprehensive school reform to foster internal-external partnerships to build a school's capacity for ongoing improvement of student learning. Thus, the scope of "distributed leadership" may include external educational partners as well.

As seen above, the focus of distributed leadership is instructional improvement, and such leadership includes varied stakeholders. Recent literature on teacher capacity and professional development emphasizes "professional communities of practitioners" and collaborative, well-knit communities that interact using professional norms as critical to improving instruction (Lieberman, 1996; Newmann, King & Youngs, 2000; Smylie, 1996). Sarason (1996), for example, raises important issues about the norms of a professional community, stressing that civil discourse, self-analysis focused on student gains, and regular feedback are critical to schools striving to improve:

> "Civil discourse" involves deep discussions that are conducted in a climate of mutual respect and are focused on student progress. Done well, civil discourse promotes a more professional school climate and improves a staff's capacity to work with students. (p. 352)
>
> "Self-analysis" focused on student gains is "planning for and taking the time to step back from action to examine it in the light of its original intentions" (p. 353). The whole faculty is involved in the self-analysis on a continuing basis and is guided by "overarching goals and hoped-for outcomes" (p. 353).
>
> "Regular feedback," provided by external agents, is essential because, "they bring with them clear eyes to both actions taken and existing outcomes" (p. 353). This feedback differs from standard forms of evaluation and is provided to "help individuals and groups grow by offering them a perspective that they cannot have on their own work" (p. 354).

No review of contemporary trends in leadership is complete without alluding to the increasing presence of ideas from business management in education. Senge's (1994) work on the development of learning organizations through a focus on continuous improvement has been influential in the school improvement community. However, most other approaches borrowed from business and government are critiqued by educators as based on a model of transformational leadership, in which innovators with little or no educational experience used frameworks from business and government (such as privatization and productivity) as catalysts for school reform, without attention to institutional and social factors. Tyack and Cuban (1995), for instance, characterize this "innovations" approach as short-lived:

> Why were the start-from-scratch innovations proposed by outsiders mostly short-lived? Innovators outside schools who wanted to reinvent education rarely factored into their plans a sophisticated understanding of the school as an institution or insight into the culture of teachers. (p. 113)

Some key lessons emerge from the above review:

- **Leadership development should focus on a "distributed" form of leadership in which administrators, teachers, and increasingly parents and community members, cohesively lead schools. Instructional improvement should be a primary focus of distributed leadership.**
- **Leadership development must be based on norms of interaction that ensure a professional community of leaders who strive toward common goals and assess their efforts in addressing them.**
- Cohesive teams of leaders are therefore needed to maintain the integrity of complex school improvement efforts. Such teams need integrated capacity-building programs that bridge the traditional divide between preparation and ongoing professional development of middle-level teachers and administrators. We present three profiles of school leaders within the context of the SSA project that demonstrate what distributed leadership looks like from the viewpoint of a staff coordinator, a principal, and a teacher. At the end of this section we reflect on the lessons learned about an integrated program of middle-level leadership development.

Three Profiles of Middle-level Leaders

This section profiles three SSA leaders—an administrator, a staff coordinator, and a teacher—to demonstrate the varied leadership roles they played in school improvement and capacity building in their respective middle-grades schools. The profiles show the role of school leaders as a catalyst for school change, especially in influencing schools to become more learner-centered. These three participants are representative of participants from all schools in the project in several ways: they have participated in SSA for the same length of time as the others, and represent the majority of roles (e.g., administrator, staff coordinator, teacher), regional composition (rural and urban), and race/ethnicity (predominantly African-American and White) of the group of participants.

A Staff Coordinator Becomes a Catalyst for Whole School Improvement

Paula King worked at Beech Elementary/Middle School in Detroit as a middle school teacher for 28 years. She taught grades 5–8, was a staff coordinator at the school and was also enrolled in an administrator certification program, until her untimely death in 2000. She held a continuing certification for grades K–8, and was a resident of Detroit, MI. Paula attended the first institute of the series, the orientation to SSA in 1997. By her own estimate, as well as that of her colleagues, she grew as an SSA leader in her own school, and within the network of SSA schools. Paula often reflected on the excitement she witnessed among Beech's staff when she shared her learning from the first SSA institute. As she gained deeper knowledge of the process, she saw its potential for individual and school change, and became what she terms "a rah-rah person" for the process in her school and other schools. Beech was reviewed in spring 1998 and Paula continued to collaborate with staff and SSA organizers to develop an action plan for implementation based on review results, and set the plan in motion, until her health began to fail. Paula participated in three reviews of other schools and also co-led a review with the senior reviewer. She stated that she grew professionally and personally through her participation in SSA and was widely seen as a school improvement leader in her school. For her, "There is no going back to the way I used to do things. Self-Assessment has been an eye-opening experience." Paula saw her main role in the school as working with administrators, teachers, and parents to further the schoolwide implementation of the goals so that teaching and learning were the focus of all improvement. She was also an active leader of the SSA network in Michigan.

Learning skills and facing challenges. Like most other participants in the project, Paula reported attending the initial SSA orientation with the attitude "Oh, here's one more thing I have to go to." (Teachers and administrators alike report getting tired from attending workshops and seminars that they did not find helpful in improving classroom practices). Paula said the principal of Beech suggested that she attend because she was getting a degree in school administration and the training would help her implement new projects in the school. SSA, in Paula's view, differed from other professional development because "what you learn comes alive in your school." However, it was not an easy path, as the process of learning new knowledge and skills and implementing them within the school, Paula faced some challenging situations. SSA uses facilitated group discussions as a method to elicit participation during professional development. Paula, in early institutes, and on her first review, was a hesitant public speaker. She did not jump in with comments or offer summaries during discussion, although she said that she had a lot that she wanted to share with the others. Over the course of her participation, however, she became an active participant and eloquent presenter, as she learned to model the process for her school. In her words:

> I am a shy person, but now I have to stand up and bring this process to the whole staff. Self-Assessment has taught me what I am capable of. The staff sees me as a leader. I didn't see myself that way, but they do.

Similarly, she was not comfortable with report writing, a task that the review team conducts with severe time constraints, and admitted that she found this piece of SSA intimidating. However, she decided to face this challenge by asking SSA organizers for additional support with report writing, and suggested a day-long institute devoted to a writing workshop. SSA organizers, in turn, created a writing component with the input of Paula and other participants, and offered it as part of the intermediate institute in SSA.

Taking back key ideas to the school. An aspect of the Self-Assessment process that most appeals to Paula is its emphasis on a school's own learning goals and evidence for attaining those goals. She feels this emphasis counteracts a powerful tendency to blame and criticize among administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students:

> The goals are not a given package; the staff sets the school's teaching and learning goals. I saw a big change in myself when I started thinking in terms of the goals and looking for things that we were doing to meet our goals. It changed the way I saw people and the things they did. Self-Assessment took on personal meaning for me.

Paula realized from her interactions with other SSA participants that they shared her experiences. The enthusiasm within her school to learn more about the process reinforced her belief that SSA could help her school change in essential ways:

> Self-Assessment has taught me that I have changed and that other teachers can change. I don't want our staff to think that this is a quick fix. I want them to understand it gradually, like I did. It is easy to bring on other teachers, the process is interesting. The hard part is to practice it in a deep way in the classroom.

Focusing the school on ongoing improvement. Paula noted that that the external review brought home to the majority of the staff the implications of self-assessment for school improvement, in a way that did not threaten or alienate them. As an emerging leader of SSA in the school, Paula was nervous before the review when teachers came to her expressing fear and hesitation about participating. The school had experienced an accreditation visit the previous week by a team of evaluators, and teachers were concerned that the SSA process would replicate what the accreditation team had already done. "After all my work, the same fears arose!" said Paula; "I did my best to reassure them, and then just crossed my fingers and hoped that everything would go all right." In retrospect, she reflected that the back-to-back timing of the accreditation visit and the SSA review only enhanced the non-threatening aspect of the latter and helped staff accept the review team and its report without reservation. With the help of other staff and the school's partner, Paula planned ongoing follow-up sessions, in which staff in the school prioritized future areas of work (taking the lead from the review report) and planned and implemented next steps, especially in the area of developing students' higher order thinking skills. Paula reported that she had the full support of the principal and staff in implementing subsequent phases of the project.

Leading professional development within the SSA network of schools. In addition to her leadership of the project within the school, Paula began taking on a bigger role in expanding SSA within the state. She said, "Because I had to get our school ready for Self-Assessment, I can give insight to other schools." Paula mentored other schools in learning the different pieces of SSA at various institutes organized by AED. She worked with organizers to model sessions on reviewing student work; expertly led a review simulation; and clarified concepts and answered questions for participants from new schools. During a workshop, when the group she led was writing a report for the simulation, members of her team discussed the concept of "using their minds well," which was a goal for students of the school under review. A team member struggled with the phrase, saying she could not easily pinpoint how this goal would look in the classroom or in student work. Others in the team agreed that the wording needed clarification. In her role as senior reviewer, Paula urged the group to consider the definition of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) as a rubric for "using their minds well." Team members discussed the idea and field-tested HOTS criteria on a few pieces of student work, agreeing that it worked well. In her evaluation of the institute, Paula wrote about her experience of being the senior reviewer: "I do not want to sound immodest, but I felt a great deal of pride as the group put together a report on the fictional school. I didn't feel uncomfortable or frightened by the process. Practice truly makes perfect, and it gives confidence."

SSA increasingly depends on experienced practitioners from participating schools to lead professional development institutes for new schools, as part of its commitment to building state-level capacity for sustaining and expanding the project in the long term. In an orientation held at a middle school in Detroit, Paula opened her presentation on the purpose and benefits of SSA with a story about two neighboring villages with equal resources, one experiencing poverty and the other plenty, making a point about the benefits of collaboration over competition in the richer village. Paula urged new participants to take the process back to their schools to foster collaboration and improvement that the process is capable of fostering, and offered her assistance to the group with planning and implementing SSA in their schools.

A Principal's Journey from Facilitative to Instructional Leadership

Karen Moore has worked in the field of education for over 30 years and is currently the principal of Hope Elementary/Middle School in Detroit. She was previously principal of a K–12 school with the largest population of physically-challenged students in Detroit. Karen also worked as a language arts specialist with Detroit Public schools and taught English at the middle and high school levels. She holds an advanced degree in education and is a resident of Detroit, MI. Karen has participated in SSA since she first attended the orientation for new schools that Paula also attended in 1997. In what her staff call "Ms. Moore's style," she invited up to 10 members of her staff—representing the administration, faculty, and community—to attend the SSA orientation that she considered potentially valuable. When this group returned to the school, their mood was, in Karen's words: "Let's immediately disseminate this information among our teachers; let's do it in the staff meetings! We immediately planned a retreat down to the last detail." This spirit of enthusiasm has continued to characterize Hope Elementary/Middle's participation in the project. It was the first school that volunteered for an external review, and has shown leadership in all the following stages of implementation as well. Karen's own role has grown from being a facilitator of the school's core team to becoming an instructional leader. Like Paula, she is also active in mentoring new schools at SSA professional development institutes and sees it as her responsibility to spread the word about the project to other schools in Detroit.

Connecting staff with professional development. Karen's role in SSA in her school was initially to support the school's core team of teacher leaders. She ensured that the team had adequate time to plan and implement Self-Assessment workshops and retreats; invited SSA organizers to work with the team on the different stages of the project; and disseminated information on upcoming SSA events among staff and in the community. In the early stages of the project she said: "I see my role as a facilitator in this project. I see so many teachers emerging as leaders, taking on different responsibilities. I feel that we have found direction, and I want to make sure I nurture what is happening."

Karen is a popular principal. Several students address her as "mama;" and staff and community members express great respect and affection for her. Karen also clearly sees herself as a leader, or in her words, "someone who has a vision and is looking for ways to fulfill it." She described how SSA helped her school focus: "I've been in workshops, teacher training and inservices with my staff before, but they didn't help us focus in the way Self-Assessment does. Not only is my own vision clearer, I also now know how to get there." Karen's growing knowledge of SSA helped her see that she needed to transcend her "facilitator" role and became an instructional leader who guides her school with teaching and learning clearly in focus.

Creating a culture for instructional improvement. This turning point came for Karen after her school experienced an external review and received a report and questions for reflection from the review team. Karen described an "ah-ha" moment when she read the report, realizing that she could use it as "a map" to keep her and the staff focused on their critical priorities. As a principal within a large urban district undergoing several changes of leadership, she stated: "I felt like I was constantly fighting fires. But School Self-Assessment has given me a clear map of where to go. We are no longer preoccupied with fighting fires and are focused on our core mission: the improvement of teaching and learning."

Karen, initially a supporter of her staff's professional development, became deeply engaged with a group of staff in learning about different approaches to fostering literacy schoolwide, and finding resources to bring in professional development into her school. She set in motion a series of instructional exchanges between staff to allow them to share different reading and writing approaches that they used with their students. Karen described the follow-up that took place in her school after the review:

> The burden to pick up the ball after a review is on the school. I am a believer in Self-Assessment; I have not done any part of it half-heartedly. My staff sees that and is with me on this. After the review we sat down every Wednesday after school to think about how to follow up our review. We first began by looking at the school improvement plan and the reflection questions in the report. We surfaced all the areas that were common to both, prioritized some main areas, and asked how we could best address them—for example, extending excellent instruction in reading and writing to all classrooms. We then brainstormed programs that would get us going in this direction. One of the new programs that addresses reading and writing involves retired principals who prepare a class using inquiry-based instruction and come into the school and model a class for teachers.

Additionally, special education and reading resource teachers shared strategies that they used to teach struggling readers, and encouraged teachers of regular education to try these strategies with their students. Karen also dedicated time and funds for teachers to undergo intensive professional development in literacy approaches that they selected; and created opportunities for the entire staff and parents and community members to also learn about these approaches. Realizing the important role a media center plays in literacy, she organized a revamping of the library and sought funds to order age-appropriate novels and print materials that teachers could use to augment regular textbooks.

Sharing the message with other schools. Karen's positive experiences with SSA made her an ambassador for the process with principals from other schools: "I tell other principals that this is something good. It helps you, it's not threatening. I think a lot of Detroit-area principals want to come on board." At a recent SSA institute in Detroit, a middle-level principal described his response to Karen's presentation on SSA: "I was immediately impressed by what this process has done for her school. She's the reason I'm here." Karen has also made presentations on the school improvement potential of SSA at several workshops and conferences, and led an external review of a school in 2000. She also leads SSA institutes and mentors Detroit area schools that are new to the process.

Karen's commitment to the SSA process greatly facilitated the rapidity with which it took root at Hope Elementary/Middle. It is important to note that her commitment grew from her own need to steer the school in a direction that encompassed and synthesized varied approaches to improving student learning. Karen notes that the clarity of her vision helped her apply for and get a grant from a national education foundation to better integrate different instructional programs and approaches under the rubric of improving literacy. She said, "The goals we set as a school help us integrate different pieces so that they are one big pie."

A Teacher's Struggle to Sustain School Improvement Efforts

Rose Smith has worked in education for 25 years. She currently teaches mathematics and health education at the Lexington Middle School in central Michigan. She holds an advanced degree in physical education and is certified in secondary education. Rose's introduction to SSA was less conventional than that experienced by most other participants. She substituted for a colleague on a review team with only a very brief introduction to SSA. However, her first experience of this process, although difficult, got her deeply interested in all its aspects.

Rose's experience with SSA represents some of the deep struggles that educators experience with taking on new roles. At the outset, she understood the project to be an instructional exchange program. Over time, she realized that it was a teaching and learning improvement initiative, with a whole-school focus. As she gained a better understanding of the project and developed a commitment to its ideals, she struggled to gain new knowledge and skills to aid her in playing a leadership role in improving the school. During the period following the review, Lexington faced staff turnover and changed principals, which significantly set back Rose's efforts to help staff maintain the momentum of school improvement efforts. Rose initiated a series of conversations with the new principal and staff to familiarize them with the school's SSA efforts and progress, but found that the principal was determined to set his own course, and not continuing efforts begun under the previous principal. Rose was disappointed and frustrated by his stance, but continued to participate in the SSA network with the hope of bringing back useful ideas and strategies to the staff.

Learning about SSA. Rose first heard about "something called School Self-Assessment" from members of the core team from Lexington who attended the initial orientation and professional development institutes. SSA appealed to her because SSA brought experts in middle-grades education to her school, which is located in a remote rural area. She assumed SSA organizers would "tell us what to do to improve our school. I thought we needed that."

Rose's in-depth exposure to the process came when she substituted for Lexington's counselor on an external review of a middle school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Rose came into the review assuming that it was an opportunity for teachers from different schools to share instructional strategies, which they would then try in their own classrooms and schools. Through participating in procedures such as shadowing students, observing classrooms, interviewing members of the school and community, and participating in review team meetings, she understood the purpose of the review and the larger process of self-assessment in which it was embedded. Like others on the review team, Rose struggled with writing her section of the report and worried about its relevance to the reviewed school. Rose reflected on the review experience, saying: "It was like being dropped into something with no warning! I learned a lot in a short week."

Becoming engaged in school improvement activities. After the review, Rose took an active interest in SSA and began attending institutes with other members of the SSA core team from her school, as well as assisting them in implementing SSA activities in the school. For her, however, the value of Self-Assessment was the exchange made possible between and within schools. At a professional development institute she said: "Going on a review opened my eyes to practices in classrooms in another school. This is the highlight of my participation in this project."

Over the course of the year and a half following the Lexington review, Rose became actively involved in preparing her school, Lexington, for internal and external review, along with other members of the SSA team. It was during this same period that the principal of her school began considering other job opportunities in the area and became less involved with the review process. The SSA team at Lexington realized that the project could not attain its full potential without administrative support. They raised this issue with SSA organizers, who supported them with additional technical assistance, but could not resolve the administrative issues faced by the school. Disheartened, SSA team members began to question their ability to carry the project forward. This point was brought home forcefully after the external review, when the school received a report from the review team, but did not begin follow-up activities because the principal, by this time, had decided to leave his position at Lexington and became increasingly disengaged from the team's school improvement efforts.

Sustaining SSA in difficult circumstances. Rose, although disturbed by these circumstances, resolved to learn as much as possible about follow-up from the experiences of other schools in the SSA network to take back to her school. She said: "We cannot let this process die. This has the potential to unite our school and help us focus on how to improve teaching and learning." This resolve changed how Rose viewed the progress of other project schools. At an early SSA institute, she stated that she was intimidated by updates of progress by other schools, and considering not coming to future workshops as she had so little to report from Lexington. In her words: "Our school is far behind these other schools. They have developed so many strategies to improve their school. We are lagging behind." Rose, however, continued to attend workshops in the spirit of productive exchange, even as she tried to jumpstart follow-up efforts at Lexington through trying to boost the morale of the SSA team and orienting the new principal to SSA. However, she soon discovered that the new principal intended to chart his own course for the school, one that did not include any of the initiatives begun by the previous principal.

She continued her participation in the SSA network, while sustaining her efforts to keep the SSA team focused on gaining the principal's support of their work. At institutes, Rose took copious notes on follow-up strategies utilized by other schools and talked informally with members of core teams on varied school improvement topics. She described this as a great learning experience: "I always go back enriched from this network. Our school needs these kinds of ideas if we are to proceed with implementing our goals." An institute leader described Rose's tireless approach: "That's Rose for you. She never lets difficulties prevent her from moving forward to learn new things and try out new roles." Although hesitant to describe herself as a leader in her school or the network, Rose sees her role as having shifted from someone who struggled with the school's lack of direction and leadership to someone who is a growing leader in the school: "I was drawn to SSA because I thought I'd learn a lot about classroom practices, but I've learned also about what it takes to change a school. I'm not sure where my efforts at Lexington are going, but I feel it's worthwhile to keep trying."

SUMMARY

The participants profiled in this chapter vary by the role they play within their respective schools: Paula King was a staff developer, Karen Moore is a principal, and Rose Smith, a teacher. All three said they developed an interest in SSA because they found it very relevant to improving their schools, as well as personally and professionally renewing. They developed significant leadership skills through their participation in SSA and (with varied degrees of success) helped their school focus on the improvement of teaching and learning on a continuing basis. All three described the professional development as leading to "ah-ha!" moments that inspired them to take on the responsibility of sharing the Self-Assessment process with their school communities. They all appreciated learning about the process on an ongoing basis, "like peeling an onion layer by layer," as Paula described it. Taking back the SSA professional development, in a similarly sequenced manner, to their school communities enhanced their understanding of the process as well as enabled them to play leadership roles in school improvement within their schools.

Another highlight that all three mentioned was the community built by such ongoing professional development, resulting from the sharing of professional ideas and experiences with participants from other schools in the project. This network of practitioners is widely valued by all participants, who state that it is "always professionally refreshing" to come back to the group. All three participants view this community as "my network" and feel that the expansion of the project to new schools has renewed their motivation since they are now mentors, not just within their respective schools, but also to new schools in the network.

Paula, Karen, and Rose were also involved in conducting professional development activities for new schools and have worked collaboratively with SSA organizers to shape the agenda for professional development and technical assistance within the project on an ongoing basis. In part, it is the commitment of these three participants, and others like them, which sustained the vision and collaborative spirit of the SSA network, as well as allowed it to grow to include participants from other schools. Members of new schools viewed Paula, Karen and Rose as mentors with rich experience in implementing Self-Assessment. Their expertise in within-school implementation, mentoring new schools, and leading reviews has built capacity in the state to sustain SSA as a practitioner-led initiative.

The profiles illustrate differences as well as similarities in the three participants' experiences with SSA, which are attributable to their role in the school, as well as the political circumstances in their respective schools. The staff coordinator and the principal were able to influence school improvement planning using the review report and engage staff in making recommendations to address the issues raised, which the teacher was unable to do without her principal's active support. For example, Paula was able to engage the staff in planning and implementing follow-up strategies because the principal was convinced of the value of these efforts and prioritized time and funds for professional development opportunities to bolster these efforts. Karen, as a principal, actively collaborated with her staff in shaping follow-up activities in literacy within the school, and her involvement greatly fueled the success of these activities at Hope Elementary/Middle. Rose was able to engage the entire staff in reading the report and setting priorities for action after the review. Along with the SSA team at Lexington Middle, she also responded to teachers' questions about how they could address some of the areas for strengthening instruction identified in the report by suggesting various professional development opportunities. However, without the principal's moral and financial support, Rose and other teachers were unable to obtain resources for professional development or schedule activities that could support teacher development.

Implications for Distributed Leadership in Middle-level Education

The three profiles demonstrated the struggles and achievements faced by three middle-level leaders as they strove to improve teaching and learning within their schools. Paula, Karen and Rose assumed new roles and responsibilities and overcame personal and professional challenges as they developed their leadership capacity. They also worked with teams from their schools to find successful ways to address the school's teaching and learning goals. One lesson that emerges from their experiences is that an integrated program of professional development for middle-level administrators and teachers creates greater opportunities for joint action for improving teaching and learning. Another implication illustrated by these cases is that such joint action is essential for school improvement, as administrators and teachers, in the absence of collaboration will only partially succeed in their school improvement efforts.

An Integrated Program of Professional Development for Middle-level Leaders. SSA's professional development approach targets core teams from participating schools, including administrators, teachers, and, in some schools, parents and community members. Through providing an integrated program of professional development for school stakeholders who play varied roles, SSA advances each individual's understanding of school improvement and creates opportunities for greater collaboration and coordination among such stakeholders.

Through participation in SSA professional development opportunities that emphasized joint ownership and leadership of school improvement, Paula overcame her shyness and hesitation and emerged as a leader of professional development and instructional improvement at Beech Elementary/Middle. She initially brought the principal and teachers together to learn about SSA and prepare for an external review. After the review, she continued her efforts to bring them together to address the development of students' higher order thinking skills through instructional improvement. In doing so, she stepped over the boundaries of her original staff coordinator role and became an active school improvement leader.

Karen, similarly, expanded her role from a principal who supported and encouraged teachers to try out new ideas and strategies, to an instructional leader who actively learned about strategies of instructional improvement that she shared with her staff. She also realized the importance of a coherent school improvement approach focused on the school's goals. As a result she made a deliberate effort to keep routine difficulties within the school in perspective, and plan and implement ongoing activities with her staff to improve literacy among all students. Through her exposure to an integrated program of professional development, she learned to work with her teachers as an instructional partner, and better support them by keeping them focused on the school's teaching and learning goals.

Rose offers the greatest contrast among the three educators in terms of the development of her vision and activities as a leader. She entered SSA as a middle school teacher focused on her classroom and interested in professional development on instructional strategies that proved effective in other schools. To her own surprise, she evolved into a school leader focused on the "big picture" of schoolwide improvement at Lexington Middle, deeply engaged in motivating the core team to keep up its efforts, orienting the new principal to the priorities highlighted in the review report, and bringing back new insights and strategies to Lexington Middle's staff from the SSA network. Through participation in SSA's integrated program of professional development, she engaged in discussions with principals and teacher leaders and developed a vision for schoolwide improvement, while maintaining her interest in classroom instruction. Her experience illustrates the importance of teacher leadership in school improvement but also points to the limitations of professional development not followed by joint action at the school level.

Joint Action for School Improvement. The profiles also show that while professional development can support educators in learning new roles and expanding existing ones, school-based action is essential for emerging leaders to effectively improve teaching and learning in their schools. Paula worked closely with the principal and other staff to steer the course of the school's efforts. The principal supported her emerging leadership through creating opportunities for Paula to train the entire staff in SSA strategies and endorsing the review process (including review preparation and follow-up activities). This entailed providing resources and supporting teachers' participation in various in-state professional development activities and on review teams. Such joint action paved the way for Beech Elementary/Middle to stay focused on the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning.

Karen, in her role as principal, worked closely with the core team at her school to develop and implement a coherent plan for improving student literacy. She drew on teachers' expertise in literacy instruction to create instructional exchanges within the school, learned about new approaches to help struggling readers, and arranged for time and resources for professional development in literacy instruction. She also engaged parents and community members in these efforts, bringing a wide coalition of partners to address the goal of improved literacy. Again, sustained joint action by a diverse group of stakeholders facilitated significant improvements in student literacy at Hope Elementary/Middle.

On the other hand, as described above, Rose and others on the SSA core team at Lexington Middle, despite several efforts, were unable to work effectively with the new principal, and struggled to advance their school improvement efforts. Rose was effective in raising awareness of the issues that the school needed to address but was unable to engage administrators and garner the resources needed to establish ongoing follow-up strategies. Teachers' struggles at Lexington Middle to advance improvement efforts without the active involvement of the principal illustrate the limitations of efforts not supported by joint action by administrators and teachers.

CONCLUSION

The three profiles show that SSA's professional development integrates capacity building for principals and teachers to jointly lead efforts to improve teaching and learning. Although principals still need to play key roles in their schools, teacher leaders join them in making critical decisions regarding directions for school improvement. Such professional and/or leadership development has enabled middle-level administrators to refocus their roles to become instructional leaders actively working with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning. Teachers, through developing a wider definition of their roles step out of "pockets of excellence" and share their instructional expertise with their staff as well as staff from other schools. They are also able to look at school improvement as a coherent set of activities, determine the focus of professional development, and garner the resources and time to support their learning needs so that they may serve their students better.

Rose's experience shows that teacher leaders can experience great difficulties moving a project forward in schools where administrators are not engaged in improvement efforts. However, in schools such as Hope Elementary/Middle, a productive partnership between the principal and teachers kept the school focused on improving teaching and learning.

The SSA experience makes the case for developing professional development and leadership development programs involving principals, teachers and other stakeholders in the school and developing their capacity to set school improvement goals, and assess and improve their progress in addressing these goals. The movement toward whole-school reform and other layered approaches to school improvement call for a "distributed" approach to leadership/professional development of school stakeholders which involves a cycle of inquiry into how well a school is meeting its learning goals for all students.

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CHAPTER 13

LEADERSHIP FOR RESULTS

Ronald Williamson
Eastern Michigan University

Susan Galletti
The Galef Institute

ABSTRACT

Nearly every recommendation for school reform recognized the important role of leadership in improving student learning. Differences emerge regarding the most effective way to assure skilled leaders who have the knowledge, skills and dispositions for success at the middle level. This chapter analyzes the results from two leadership development programs, one funded by a major foundation and the other by the U.S. Department of Education. Each project was designed to improve the instructional leadership of principals in some of the nations most challenging and impoverished middle schools. While the structure varied remarkably similar results emerged. Principals valued a safe, supportive, confidential environment in which to talk with a mentor about their work. They valued time to reflect on their practice and to construct new strategies and tools to use in their own setting. Most of all, they were invigorated by the opportunity to think more comprehensively about their work and how they could positively impact the learning of students in their schools.

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INTRODUCTION

> *One of the principals in the project described the support provided…as the "Cadillac of principal training programs." New skills for principals focused on instructional leadership, as well as the creation of a support group for each other…Principals became better analysts—of their own use of time, of school programs, of overall school change—and better able to guide newly empowered teachers toward meaningful school change.*
>
> (Lewis, A., 1993, p. 49)

Development of school leaders occurs in various venues, through different designs, with different belief systems, and for a variety of purposes: university preparation and licensing programs; projects sponsored by professional organizations; initiatives designed by states and individual school districts; and models provided by external providers. This chapter will analyze the results of two multi-year leadership development programs that resulted from a partnership between external service providers and several schools.

The purpose of the initiatives was not to supplant, but rather supplement, other leadership opportunities available to practicing and aspiring school leaders. The emphasis was on the development of principals and other school leaders, built on the belief that shared leadership is required for successful school reform.

What makes for a "Cadillac" leadership development program? The premise in this work is that it is one that produces a positive impact on student achievement through the creation of a caring, collaborative culture focused on student success. This analysis draws on the work of several projects funded by external providers and designed to impact the quality of leadership in middle level schools. Those projects included:

- A two-year leadership development program involving all middle school principals in Louisville, KY and Corpus Christi, TX called *Principals Make the Difference in Standards-Based Reform* and funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. The project was designed by Dr. Susan Galletti, then Associate Executive Director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and received the prestigious Tom Vest Award from the State of Kentucky (www.kasa.org). The project was cited in several publications as a model for the professional development of principals (Doda & Williamson, 2002; Educational Research Services, 2000). An external evaluation of the project was conducted by the University of Arizona (Clark & Clark, 1999).
- Initial findings from implementation of a three-year leadership course of study (2001-present) (Williamson & Galletti, 2001), designed for use in the *Different Ways of Knowing Middle Grades Comprehensive School Reform Project,* a multi-year research project funded by

the United States Department of Education. This project was designed to identify best practices to support development of transformational leadership skills among middle school principals in comprehensive school reform sites. An external evaluation of this initiative was conducted by WestEd (Chesswas, 2002).

THE CHANGING FACE OF THE MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPALSHIP

The nation faces a crisis in the preparation of school leaders. While demands on schools and school leaders continue to rise, many regions report a decline in the pool of people aspiring to school leadership. Compounding the problem, a large majority of current school leaders received training that they report ill prepares them for the issues faced by contemporary schools, and many in this same group will reach retirement age during the next five years (Educational Research Service, 1998).

A recent study of middle level principals found that 50% were age 50 or higher, nearing the retirement age (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann & Petzko, 2002), up significantly from a similar study conducted a decade earlier (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe & Melton, 1993). As many middle level leaders reach retirement age, those replacing them often have little experience or training in the principles of middle school education. Less than half of people appointed to middle level principalships came from prior positions in the middle level (Valentine et al., 2002). While the vast majority of middle level principals participated in ongoing professional development activities, over 70% had less than two courses in middle level education as part of their preparation. Thirty-seven percent reported taking no middle level courses.

Demands for greater accountability from contemporary school principals continues to escalate. Through legislative mandate as well as shifts in the expectations of parents and community groups, school leaders are increasingly faced with a need to mobilize their faculty to confront persistent issues of low student achievement, the lack of rigor, and a pervasive belief that schools fail to provide the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for success in our democracy (Beane, 1999; Williamson & Johnston, 1999).

This debate permeates the work of all schools but manifests itself most forcefully at the middle level. Described as both "the last best hope of American youth" (Carnegie Council, 1989) and as "education's weak link" (Southern Regional Education Board, 1998), the role and function of the middle school continues to be the center of dispute. Differing perspectives among school personnel and its constituents contributes to passionate debate.

Despite the evidence that many of the practices advocated for middle level schools have a positive impact on student learning (Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand & Flowers, 1997), the level of implementation lags (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann & Petzko, 2002). Parents and community advocates continue to question the effectiveness of middle level schools and an investigation of the issues that drive dissatisfaction with middle schools found a pervasive belief that middle schools were not sufficiently focused on improving student learning (Williamson & Johnston, 1999).

A NEW LOOK FOR PREPARATION OF SCHOOL LEADERS

Entwined in this mix is continued demand for a different kind of school leader. While the demand for change is remarkably uniform, the vision of what constitutes a "new" school leader often varies. Some advocate a greater focus on teaching and learning as the core business of schools; others recommend significant changes in licensure procedures, permitting individuals with little experience in schools to assume the leadership role (Schneider, 1998).

Adding to the complexity of the issue are varied perspectives among those currently engaged in the preparation of school leaders. Some suggest greater clarity of purpose (Murphy, 1999), some advocate a clear articulation of standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996), and others question the ability of current preparation programs to reform themselves (Achilles, 1998; Haller, Brent & McNamara, 1997; Schneider, 1998).

Out of this milieu, programs preparing school leaders struggled to redesign and refocus their activities. Despite the almost universal recognition of the need to reform, substantial change was slow to emerge (Achilles, 1999).

The approach to reform varied. Some preparation programs ignored the demands for change and continued business "as usual." Others launched modest reforms including modifications in course work and field-based experiences. Yet others embarked on a more fundamental examination of the underlying principles guiding their program.

While reform emerged slowly, recommendations for renormed preparation of school leaders reflected a handful of common elements:

- recognition that teaching and learning are the core activities of schools and that school leaders must be skilled at providing leadership for quality teaching and improved student learning (Achilles, 1998; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Schneider, 1998);

- incorporation of a knowledge base that reflects the reality of contemporary school leadership (Murphy, 1999; Thomson, 1993);
- inclusion of more thoughtful and purposeful preparation activities designed to provide leaders with tools to transform their schools (Leitwood, Jantzi, & Coffin, 1995; Milstein & Krueger, 1997; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 1989; 2002).

Although encouraging, many programmatic changes, once begun, were quickly institutionalized and continued "business as usual" (Achilles, 1999). While preparation was modified, core activities remained the same.

The nearly universal recognition that the school principal plays a pivotal role in creating a climate conducive to school reform drives the debate about school leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Lambert, 1998; Schwann & Spady, 1998; Smylie & Hart, 1999; Speck, 1996). Also propelling the discussion is a recognition that school leaders must change the way they do their work, to become more involved in curricular and instructional practices, and to use skills, such as participatory decision-making and data analysis, that were not previously required (Murphy, 1999).

The national debate about the preparation of school leaders led to articulation of a set of standards for school leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) that were embraced by many state education agencies (Ward, 1996) and by accrediting agencies (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002).

Responding to the need to impact the work of current school leaders, a number of external providers stepped forward to support local and regional initiatives to strengthen the skills of current school leaders (Dukess, 2002; Elmore, 2000; Lewis, 1999). These advocates funded a variety of projects designed to modify leadership practice. In each case, the external providers also funded a comprehensive evaluation of their work. From these studies emerged a portrait of ways to positively impact the preparation of school leaders.

Across these initiatives three defining principles emerged: (1) the importance of principal leadership in sustaining school reform (Lambert, 1998; Lambert et al., 2002; Schwann & Spady, 1998; Speck, 1996); (2) the value of embracing participants in more interactive and engaging professional development (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; Speck, 1996); and (3) the importance of incorporating constructivist approaches to learning (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Mohr, 1998; Wagner, 1998).

The implications of these three principles were profound in the design and implementation of the initiatives reported in this chapter. Recognizing that reform was most successful where the principal was a forceful and highly visible advocate led to a focus on working with principals to strengthen their work, and to modify the way they interacted with their faculty and with families and community.

New Visions of Staff Development

Serious systemic issues confront school leaders as they reform their schools. Indeed, the expectation in every state is that leaders will play a central role in assuring that their school is accountable for improved student learning, for greater collaboration with constituent groups, and for assuring a rigorous and challenging academic experience for all students. A central feature of all reform initiatives is helping school personnel develop the capacity to modify practice and address these important issues. Professional development, therefore, becomes critical.

Educators have traditionally held a narrow definition of staff development (Monahan, 1996). It often consisted of a series of disconnected sessions presented by district personnel or external consultants. Its success was often measured in hours of participation, rather than results. It was often characterized by presentation of new information and ideas with little subsequent effort to apply new learnings.

A new conception of professional development has emerged, driven in part by the missteps of prior efforts. Led by the National Staff Development Council, but advocated by all major professional organizations, staff development is increasingly characterized by these characteristics—results-driven, systems thinking, and constructivist (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

These ideas impacted the way professional development in the projects described here were designed and delivered. The notion that the success of professional development should be measured by results, requires a dramatically different orientation. It requires that providers of professional development consider their focus, beginning with the end in mind, and assessing the impact on student learning.

Establishing this link between professional development and results leads to greater attention to the application of learning, and its meaning for individuals in their own setting. It requires that professional development be sensitive to the context of individual principals, and individual schools, and to allow participants to construct their own meaning and application.

Reporting specifically on the professional development of principals, Evans and Mohr (1999) described seven core beliefs identified during their work at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (Table 13.1). The principals who participated in this initiative worked in urban, suburban, and rural schools; schools with a variety of grade combinations. They met at least four times per year with continued communication between the seminars.

Out of this work emerged several critical learnings about the professional development of principals. First, learning was personal but to be most successful occurred while working with others. This reflected an appreciation to the unique context of each individual school and each school leader. Further, important structural attributes were identified. They included pushing principals to move beyond their current ways of thinking including challenging many of the assumptions that principals brought to their work. Equally essential was providing a learning environment that provided focused reflection and provided protection from adverse consequences that might arise from the issues raised or points-of-view that principals espoused.

Table 13.1. Attributes of Principal Professional Development

Principals' learning is personal and yet takes place most effectively while working in groups.
Principals foster more powerful faculty and student learning by focusing on their own learning.
While we honor principals' thinking and voices, we want to push principals to move beyond their assumptions.
Focused reflection takes time away from "doing the work," yet it is essential.
It takes strong leadership in order to have truly democratic learning.
Rigorous planning is necessary for flexible and responsive implementation.
New learning depends on protected dissonance.

From: Evans, P. & Mohr, N. (1999). Professional development for principals: Seven core beliefs. *Phi Delta Kappan, 80*(7), 530–532.

In a comprehensive examination of innovative approaches to the professional development of principals, Peterson (2002) selected thirteen programs and looked for design commonalities. This analysis revealed six common program elements. They involved creation of study groups, opportunity for reading and discussion, provision of advanced seminars on selected topics, access to current national scholars and expert practitioners, attendance at national conferences and academies, and opportunities to serve as coaches and facilitators themselves.

A common feature of many professional development models is mentoring (Dukess, 2002). Mentoring offers important benefits to participants by allowing services to be tailored to the individual mentee, and provides an opportunity to build a strong personal relationship between the mentor and the mentee.

Several mentoring programs launched in six New York City Community School Districts were the focus of a study conducted by New Visions for Public Education (Dukess, 2002). Each of the programs shared a common goal—"to provide principals with needed support through one-on-one relationships with experienced, expert principals" (p. 1). Delivery methods varied among the programs but the study identified several characteristics of sound mentor programs.

Success at mentoring was built on several critical interpersonal factors. In all cases it was important to have a match between the mentor and mentee. Without a comfortable "match" little else mattered. When the "match" was good the relationship was characterized by honest and trusting conversation. New Visions found that a solid mentoring relationship encompassed " both emotional support and expertise with needed skills" (Dukess, 2002, p. 17). Successful mentoring relationships were also confidential and non-supervisory. Mentees felt comfortable sharing challenges they faced and honestly discussing their own capabilities. Risky conversation required a setting that assured confidentiality. Further, successful mentoring relationships were participatory rather than directive. The mentor's role was seen as offering advice, asking provocative questions, and challenging assumptions rather than telling the mentee what to do.

Simultaneous to development of new staff development standards, a set of standards for school leaders was designed (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) These standards emphasized greater collaboration among school leaders, teachers and families, and recognized the importance of "advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth" (Council of Chief State School Officers, p. 24). These standards articulated the changed expectations for the work of school leaders.

Measuring the Effectiveness of Professional Development

Evaluating the impact of professional development is complex (Guskey & Sparks, 1991). Guskey (2000) suggested five measures for the success of staff development—participants' reactions, participants' learning, organization support and change, participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes (pp. 78–86). Guskey identified a variety of ways that these outcomes could be measured including short questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, learning logs, writing samples and on-site observations as strategies.

External evaluations of the reform initiatives described in this chapter utilized many of these approaches. Clark and Clark (1999), in their evaluation of the *Principals Make a Difference in Standards-Based Reform* project, used survey data, participant observation, individual and small group interviews, shadowing, and program documents to assess the impact of the project. Data from the *Different Ways of Knowing Middle-Grades* project

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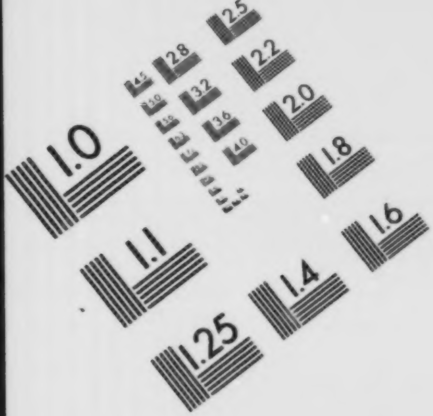

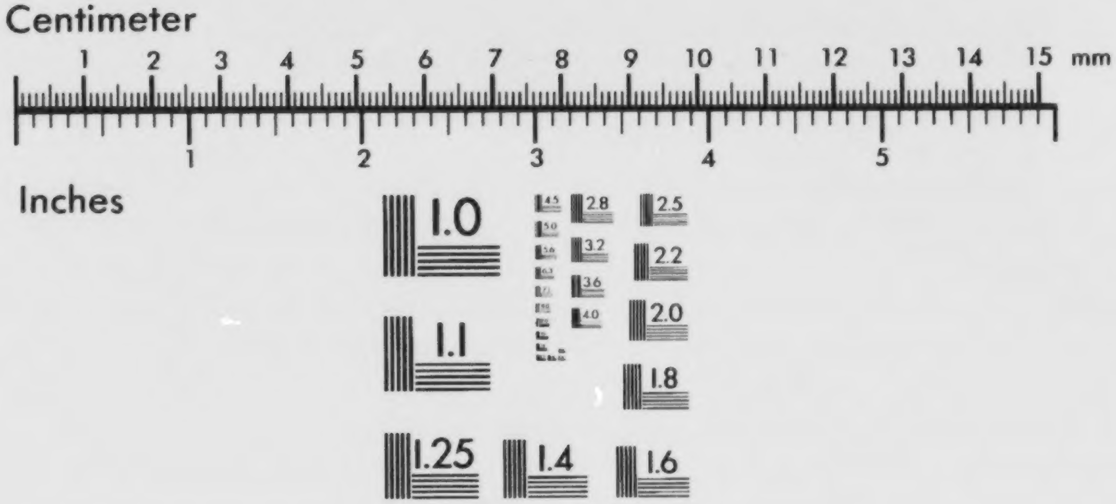
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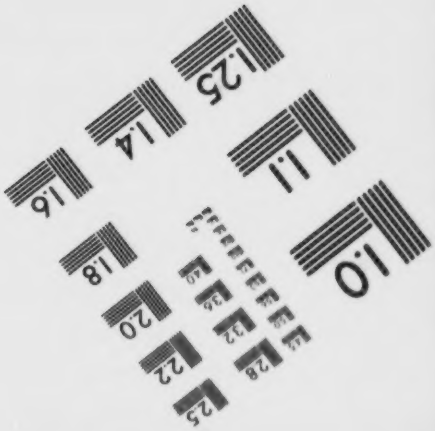

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included student achievement data, participant observation, individual and small group interviews and surveys (Chesswas, 2002).

The analysis described in this chapter examined the impact of these professional development models on principal leadership. It focused primarily on process responses, those strategies employed to build and sustain school reform. By examining these responses other approaches were not minimized. The emphasis, however, was on identification of those strategies that nurtured and supported the professional development of principals.

This analysis, while focused on urban middle level principals, identified strategies that may be used to successfully work with school leaders in any setting to address persistent and potentially contentious issues. The work of these principals can inform and enlighten the work of school leaders at any level.

Lessons about Professional Development of Urban Middle School Principals

Important lessons emerged from this analysis. They reflect the continuing metamorphosis of professional development from didactic to interactive, from directive to collaborative, and from a focus on management to a focus on student learning. These lessons provide useful insights for those planning similar initiatives.

Why an External Provider?

In a report prepared for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Neufeld (1995) found that the opportunities provided by external providers with support from foundations "did not duplicate training available in the districts" (p. 8). Quite the contrary, principals reported they had few, if any, professional development opportunities provided by their districts. They consistently reported that in-district opportunities were limited to enhancing management skills and meeting bureaucratic requirements. Few opportunities were available within their districts to learn about their own leadership role and how it might evolve in the context of contemporary middle school reform and heightened accountability for results.

Ricciardi (1999) surveyed middle school principals about professional development and found that they reported difficulty attending training due to time demands of their job. More importantly, they asked that alternative delivery methods be considered and wanted the content to match their individual needs. Principals also placed a high value on time to network with other principals, and wanted more intensive follow-up training once they returned to their schools and began implementation of new initiatives.

A comprehensive examination of the needs of principals found that principals viewed professional development as a catalyst for change and a potential resource to support desired change (Educational Research Service, 2000). The study reported that opportunities to network with principal colleagues "on a regional level, outside the immediate local politics, pressures, and issues of the school district" were largely unavailable, but valued. Principals also desired peer coaching, including specific feedback about their work; individualized professional development; translation of theory into practice; opportunities for hands-on application of the concepts being presented; and access to research and other resources (McCay, 1999).

External providers are often able to provide models of professional development that embrace these ideas. Because they are external, they are not handicapped by internal politics and policy and can therefore support more creative approaches to professional development, approaches based on the identified needs of principals. The projects studied for this analysis provided many of the opportunities valued by principals. They included onsite, job-embedded professional development that provided opportunity to interact with principals both regionally and nationally; adaptation of a research based design to local contexts; an objective, "critical friend" lens that transcends local politics; uninterrupted and focused attention to school improvement; and "capacity building" strategies through a partnership that strives to provide district staff with tools to sustain the work once external support ceases.

The Context of No Child Left Behind

The new ESEA legislation, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), requires that school personnel be accountable for very specific targeted results in the areas of: literacy; teacher quality; leadership quality; whole school reform; and use of "scientifically based research" (Brown, 2002). The NCLB legislation provided guidelines for quality professional development with the expectation that professional development activities would be:

- an integral part of broad school-wide and district-wide educational improvement plans;
- give teachers, principals, and administrators the knowledge and skills to assure that students performance achievement standards;
- high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom;

- sustained rather than 1-day or short-term;
- developed with extensive participation of those to be served;
- regularly evaluated for their impact on increased teacher effectiveness and improved student academic achievement; and
- include instruction in the use of data and assessments to inform and instruct classroom practice. (Brown, 2002, pp. 29–31)

Why Focus on Professional Development for School Leaders?

The school principal has emerged as the most critical component in school reform. While principals do not directly impact student achievement, school leaders influence student learning indirectly through their work shaping school climate, improving instructional quality, and supporting teacher professional development (Youngs & King, 2002). Richard Riley, former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, in a 1999 satellite Town Meeting described the principalship as "a position that is absolutely critical to educational change and improvement." When asked to discuss "what's ahead for tomorrow's principals," Joseph Murphy, a longtime researcher of school leadership, envisioned a job that responded to a dramatically different world.

> Tomorrow's principals will both shape the organization and overhaul the system to meet the demands of a new social structure (although) knowledge of instruction will be at the forefront of their leadership skills as they maintain a focus on teaching and learning. (1998, p. 4)

Dennis Sparks, Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council, suggested that to achieve high levels of learning for all students, to have all students work with competent teachers, and to have all teachers receive the "powerful new forms of professional development they require to be effective with an increasingly diverse student body" (2002, p. 7–1), principals need to be "consensus builders, strong instructional leaders, and skillful in forming and sustaining professional learning communities" (pp. 7–1, 7–2). It also requires that "principals distribute leadership among teachers who then perform key roles in the school improvement process" (p. 7–2).

At the same time that researchers grew to appreciate the importance of the principal in school reform, school districts reported that they were finding it difficult to attract qualified candidates to fill vacancies (Educational Research Services, 1998). Districts found themselves hiring principals that may not have all the skills essential for reform and other school improvement efforts. Nevertheless, expectations for principals continued to increase.

Today, principals are expected to have a quite different set of skills from earlier years. They are expected to create learning communities in their schools and to engage in the broader school community in creating and achieving a compelling vision for its schools, which often serve increasingly diverse students. They are asked to give up autocratic forms of leadership and to become instructional leaders steeped in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; leaders who can coach, teach, develop, and distribute leadership to others. They need to know academic content and pedagogical techniques and must be skilled at working with teachers to strengthen their skills. They need to be able to collect, analyze, and use data in ways that promote excellence (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Sparks, 2000). Even while expected to embrace new roles, principals also are accountable for traditional management responsibilities such as the budget, schedule, and discipline.

These "new" expectations are at the center of contemporary designs for the professional development of principals. They shape content and guide activities. They form the basis for relationships and conversations. Traditional models of professional development fail to address the needs of principals for engaging, interactive, results-driven professional development.

Distributed Leadership

To achieve the results demanded of schools a more inclusive definition of leader is required. It increasingly includes teachers, other staff members, families, students, and members of the larger educational community. Elmore (2000) identified five principles of distributed leadership:

- The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role;
- Instructional improvement requires continuous learning;
- Learning requires modeling;
- The roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement, not from the formal dictates of the institution; and
- The exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity.

Any leadership development that expects to produce results for students needs to attend to the development of teacher leaders as well as to school administrators.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the impact of professional development on middle level principals in the projects described in this chapter was guided by the data collected throughout each project by the external evaluation teams (Chesswas, 2002; Clark & Clark, 1999). This analysis identified several important design characteristics of successful professional development for principals.

Standards-Based Context

The most powerful forms of professional development for principals are standards-based and embedded in their daily work (Evans & Mohr, 1999). Standards in several areas guided each of these projects—standards for student learning (derived from the district, state, and national standards); standards for teaching (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards); standards for leadership (derived from the Council of Chief State School Officers' Interstate School Licensure Consortium (1996) and standards for staff development recommended by the National Staff Development Council (Sparks & Hirsch, 1997).

The *Standards for School Leaders* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) illustrate the impact. Only one of the standards pertains to what was formerly considered a principal's core responsibility—management. Current standards expect principals to provide leadership for transforming their school. One standard (Standard 1) states that the leader must facilitate "the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community" (Council of Chief State School Officers, p. 12). This standard requires a commitment to high standards of learning for all students and continuous school improvement. Another standard (Standard 2) calls for a school leader to nurture and sustain an instructional program "conducive to student learning and staff professional growth." These and other standards create an expectation for a significantly different kind of school leader.

Standards for student learning provide a focus for design of school action plans and are guided by analysis of data about student learning. Standards for teaching offer a benchmark against which the school leaders can compare their current practices against "best practices," provide a common vocabulary for instructional improvement. They give purpose and meaning to instructional walk-throughs and teacher evaluation. The standards for professional development (National Staff Development Council, 2001) guide decisions about content and processes for professional development.

Importance of Modeling

Quality professional development for school leaders models effective learning practices (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 2000). The importance of this belief was reflected in both leadership development projects described in this chapter. Each included structures designed to create learning communities. Principals worked collaboratively and focused on their own learning. In each instance principals worked in small, sustained cohorts where they were able to have dialogue and reflect on their work in the context of a small, safe and personalized setting. Principals experienced what it meant to be part of a learning community with the goal of cultivating similar learning communities with their staff. Other practices were also modeled reflective practice; quality facilitated dialogue around teaching and learning; and the sharing of power—democratically co-constructing cohort activities with the assistance of a facilitator.

These activities were guided by several beliefs. First, was the belief that at the heart of school reform is a reflective principal, one who takes time to think about their practice and to consider its implications (Lambert, 1998; Schwann & Spady, 1998; Speck, 1996). Second, that to lead others in quality conversation about practice, principals need to experience such quality dialogue and conversation (Senge, 1990; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). The third belief was that to reculture a middle school into a learning community, principals must be willing "to be model learners and teachers" (Doda & Williamson, 2002, p. 281).

Data Driven Decision Making

If data driven decision-making is a primary responsibility of the transformational leader, use of data to guide decisions about the professional development of school leaders is imperative. In these projects, facilitators used initial and ongoing formative data to design the activities in which school and district leaders participated. For example, in both projects, facilitators engaged in initial conversations with district personnel to analyze school data and gauge district and school priorities. These conversations continued with school leaders who were encouraged to analyze data and school improvement plans to identify areas of focus for their own professional development activities. Common themes emerged that became the content for regional and national institutes. Focus areas for individual schools became the content of onsite coaching.

Doda and Williamson (2002) found that once principals recognized that the success of their own professional development rested on safe dialogue, connected with authentic experiences, they worked to create a comparable experience for their teachers. Consequently, the focus for school professional development, facilitated by the principal, centered on identified and agreed upon needs, long-term and in-house work on the issues, and attention to cultivating a safe faculty culture that focused on data-driven decision-making. The experience at one site illustrated this point. Rather than principal-prescribed professional development the faculty at one school assessed areas of concern, collected and analyzed data, and made recommendations for focused professional development. This lead to faculty study groups organized around common readings, examination of student work, and classroom visits.

Norms of Collaboration

Both projects reported that the quality of the discussion was enhanced when participants agreed upon norms for their work. In some groups the norms were informal, set during initial conversations. Most often they included a respect for differing points-of-view and an unwillingness to challenge one another (Clark & Clark, 1999). The conversation during the first year of one of the projects was described as "tenuous and guarded" (Williamson, 2000, p. 9). It was reported, however, that these initial discussions, while less open, were productive. They created a safe, caring environment, one that evolved into a supportive and nurturing setting where it was safe for principals to "ask tough questions and challenge others assumptions" (Williamson, p. 9).

The experience in Kentucky was more formal. Dr. Deborah Walker, leadership coach for *Different Ways of Knowing* and Senior Vice President of the Kentucky Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, designed a series of monthly one-day seminars scheduled over a period of five months, to build leadership capacity within participating schools centered on improved student learning. School teams included the principal and teacher leaders. Seminars focused on implementation of *Different Ways of Knowing* at the schools, including identifying successful practices and common barriers to implementation.

During the first seminar, norms of collaboration (Garmston & Wellman, 2000) were taught and modeled. Not only did this work impact the work during the seminars, it modeled a strategy that participants found applicable to their work when they returned to their schools. Comments from the evaluation illustrate this impact: "I liked the idea of setting norms for team meetings. This will help our group keep on track," " I have learned the importance of team building and its role in enhancing student learning," and "I learned that we need to establish norms as a group to make the most of our time together."

Engagement

Professional development of school leaders too often turns school leaders into passive recipients of information rather than active participants. As a result of such passive learning, Rosenholtz (1989) observed that "principals become less able colleagues, less effective problem solvers, more reluctant to refer school problems to the central office for outside assistance, more threatened by their lack of technical knowledge, and, most essential, of substantially less help to teachers" (p. 189). By engaging school leaders as active participants in their own professional development, they, in turn, can engage teachers and other stakeholders as active participants in school improvement. By experiencing action research, reflection, focused conversations on teaching and learning, the power of analyzing data, and building collaborative learning communities, school leaders gain the skills to replicate these experiences with their school communities, and gain enthusiasm and motivation for the benefits of engaging their constituencies in the same way.

Adaptation by Design

Both of the leadership development programs included in this analysis were based on similar design considerations or theory of action. They employed a combination of regional and national institutes, cohort experiences, and onsite coaching that built on prior professional development, and prior knowledge of the school leaders. Each occurred over a sustained period of time. They relied on skilled facilitators and coaches who modeled best practices for group process and coaching. They focused on the content of teaching and learning, transformational and instructional leadership, and strategies to build leadership capacity throughout the school community. Both projects also recognized the importance of adapting their design depending upon the context of the districts and schools involved (Chesswas, 2002; Clark & Clark, 1999).

One example of this adaptation emerged from the experience of the *Principals Make the Difference* project. During this project principals in both districts were focused on standards-based reform but felt overwhelmed and isolated in their work. Consequently, the design created cohorts of principals from both districts who faced similar issues. The *Different Ways of Knowing* project, however, created regional cohorts of principals (New York City, Kentucky, Texas, Southern California). Central to this project was alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment around state standards. Creation of regional cohorts facilitated this focus. To support the regional work, local leadership coaches, who understood the local context, worked with each group. Based on the unique needs and contexts of the principals, specific cohort activities and coaching varied from region to region.

Regardless of the design, national, regional or local, the value of the cohort experience for principals proved beneficial (Chesswas, 2002; Clark & Clark, 1999). Principals reported that they valued the opportunity to meet with and learn from one another, to focus on investigating a problem and developing strategies for its resolution. As one principal stated, "I always felt so isolated, like I was the only one with this problem. I don't feel that way anymore. I can draw on my colleagues for ideas and support."

Content

The content of professional development can never replicate all of the knowledge and skills required for school leadership. The majority of school principals enter their job following graduate study that almost always includes an internship or other field-based experience. The projects described in this chapter did not attempt to address all leadership issues but rather focused on leadership skills that would support middle school reform.

Districts that worked with external providers were committed to a partnership that would support school leaders as they enhanced their current work. Each of these projects provided school leaders with opportunities to experience the most significant content (i.e., produces results) in depth—as opposed to "covering" lots of content. The bias of both projects was that the content to support transformational leadership that produced results had its roots in leadership for improved teaching and learning.

The National Association for Elementary School Principals' (2001) report, *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do,* supported these beliefs. It recommended that principals provide time for teacher reflection on their own practice; invest in teacher learning; connect professional development to school learning goals; provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan, and think together; and recognize the need to continually improve their own professional practice.

Research from the Middle Level Leadership Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia suggests that transformational leadership has a greater impact on student success than either instructional leadership or managerial leadership (Valentine, 2001). Transformational leadership assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organizational members. As a result of transformational leadership, higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals result in extra effort and greater productivity. Transformational leaders manifest a set of specific skills. They include:

- Providing vision: behavior on the part of the leader aimed at identifying new opportunities for his or her school and developing, articulating, and inspiring others with his or her vision of the future.
- Modeling behavior: behavior on the part of the leader that sets an example for staff members to follow consistent with the values the leader espouses.

- Fostering commitment: behavior on the part of the leader aimed at promoting cooperation among staff members and assisting them to work together toward common goals;
- Providing individualized support: behavior on the part of the leader that indicates respect for staff members and concern about their personal feelings and needs;
- Providing intellectual stimulation: behavior on the part of the leader that challenges staff members to reexamine some of the assumptions about their work and rethink how it can be performed;
- Establishing high performance expectations: behavior that demonstrates the leader's expectations for excellence, quality, and high performance on the part of the staff. (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999)

This knowledge had significant implications for the content of professional development for principals in these two projects. These initiatives found that principals needed a set of skills that would support their work with their teachers and their community. Both projects identified similar needs (Chesswas, 2002; Clark & Clark, 1999).

First, principals need to define, and apply, best educational practices that promote the success of each student. This suggests that school leaders read the research on effective schooling, and the pedagogy and structures of schooling that support student learning. School leaders need to develop a belief system that reflects their understanding of these readings and then create dispersed leadership opportunities to support their implementation.

Creation of a culture that ensured continuous school improvement also becomes imperative. To sustain such a culture school leaders need to know how to engage faculty in analyzing and disaggregating data and turning it into information that guides school improvement. Other implications for school leaders emerged from these projects. They included how to focus on research-based best practice, how to use faculty meetings for professional development, how to nurture and sustain faculty study groups, and how to adapt organizational structures to support improved teaching and learning (Chesswas, 2002).

In order to ensure that "distributed leadership" occurs, school leaders need to know how to prepare teacher specialists within schools to act as advocates for improved teaching and serve as coaches to their peers. Consequently, school leaders need to enroll teacher specialists in their belief systems, based on their own synthesis of readings on "best practice." They need to model what it means to be a "coach" and they need to know how to engage potential teacher leaders in study groups.

School leaders also need to know how to enroll teams of teachers who are responsible for making instructional decisions and whose leaders serve on school councils. One implication is the need to design and implement schedules that provide time for teams to meet, and then develop skills to use this time most productively—engaging in conversations around action research, student work, or study of a particular instructional strategy or issue.

Effective use of time and resources for professional development emerged from both projects as a needed skill for principals. Faculty meetings can become a resource where teachers analyze data or student work. Other available "contracted" time can be bundled for purposes of forming study groups. Common planning for instructional teams becomes a valuable resource. In some schools in these projects substitutes were employed to provide teachers the opportunity to observe each other and engage in conversations about their observations.

Most of all, school leaders need to understand how their behaviors—consistent, over time, focused on results—contribute to trusting and respectful relationships that result in shared leadership for student success.

Each of these skills had significant implications for the design of the professional development experiences in these two projects. Principals began the projects with varying skill levels, and occasionally, quite different dispositions toward some of these topics. Over time, the structure of the projects permitted adaptation to fit the needs of each leader, and to address the varied contexts in which they worked. The delivery systems used in these projects contributed significantly to the impact on the professional development of principals.

Delivery Systems

The Educational Research Service (1999) suggested that effective leadership development for school leaders was long-term, focused on student achievement, job-embedded, supportive of reflective practice, and provided opportunity to work, discuss, and solve problems with peers. Further, it suggested a number of professional development activities that incorporate these principles: journal keeping, peer study groups, support networks, administrator portfolios, team training for school improvements, and personal professional development plans.

Elaine Fink and Lauren Resnick (2001) described an approach used in New York City's District 2 that focused intensively on developing principals as instructional leaders. Activities took place in schools and were geared to the specific context in which the principal worked. Principals attended monthly daylong conferences that were "...the primary vehicle for developing and building allegiance to the shared professional point of view of the district" (p. 601). Principals also participated in specialized institutes focused on particular instructional practices, attended support and study groups, participated in "inter-visitations" (visits to other schools to promote understanding of a specific practice) and "buddying" (informal meetings to share problems and strategies for their solution), and received individualized coaching.

The National Staff Development Council (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000) suggested that school systems that were serious about standards-based student learning and the quality of teaching would ensure that all principals:

- are members of ongoing study groups that delve deeply into the most important instructional issues in their schools;
- regularly visit one another's schools to learn about outstanding practice, critique colleague's improvement efforts, and support one another in improving instruction; and
- Receive frequent coaching on critical skills such as working with teachers to improve instruction, analyzing data, and critiquing student work.

Each of these recommendations was incorporated in the leadership development work analyzed in this chapter. Those practices found to most significantly impact principal learning are described in more detail.

Workshops and Institutes

Workshops and institutes were most effective when they built on and scaffolded the professional development principals received in other parts of the project (cohort experiences and onsite coaching). During the Principals Make the Difference in Standards-Based Reform project, annual institutes gathered all principals and central office staff to focus deeply on topics that were common across each of the cohorts—such as a reflective "thinking into practice" activity in which the principals were each asked to develop a "target for positive change." Principals used the national institute to enhance their knowledge and support their work, at their own site, throughout the school year and were expected to share their learning with others in their cohort.

The *Different Ways of Knowing* leadership activities included an annual national conference that was attended by teams of principals and teacher leaders. The three-day conference engaged school leaders in small groups, mixed by region but with common interests (e.g., large school, rural school). These small groups worked on an authentic task that resulted in products and tools that the leaders would use, upon return to their schools, to advance the work of school improvement. For example, in January 2003, school leaders met to enhance their understanding of different ways to "transform" the culture of their school and develop plans to empower the whole school community to accept responsibility for improved student achievement. During the conference, school leaders learned about three tools: one for analyzing the culture of their school, one for conducting a data gathering tool to create data about their school's program, and one for recognizing powerful arts strategies. School leaders developed specific plans for ways to enroll and empower school constituencies in the use of data to focus school improvement efforts through articulation of a personal and school improvement action plan.

Based on evaluations from this institute, plans for subsequent years are to engage school leaders in strategies to turn barriers into opportunities. School leaders want to continue to work in collaborative groups to learn about using data, the budget, and the school's schedule to improve instruction and positively impact student learning. Such collaborative activities allowed school leaders to discover solutions used by others who share similar challenges and incorporate them into their own action planning (Carstens, 2003).

National conferences sponsored by professional organizations can also serve as a vehicle for learning. For example, in the *Principals Make the Difference in Standards-Based Reform* leadership development project principals and members of the central-office staff of the two school districts attended the Annual Conference of the Education Trust. Groups of principals met before, during, and after the conference to discuss ways that the information presented at the conference could advance their school reform initiatives.

Cohort Groups (Study Groups)

The principalship is a lonely enterprise. Therefore, it is no surprise that principals who have been involved in cohort experiences over time report that the cohort structure is key to their "establishing new views of themselves as leaders and learners, and to their developing knowledge and skill in areas that help them advance middle school reform" (Neufeld, 1995, p. 11). Cohort opportunities provide school leaders with the opportunity to "be knowledgeable for one another as well as to gain knowledge" (p. 11.).

Anthony Alvarado validated the important outcomes for cohort groups when he emphasized the importance in leadership development of regular visits to other schools. "One thing that we need is massive intervisitation…to go places, to see practice that is actually the kind of practice that we want to implement" (Sparks, 2000, p. 2). Alvarado also emphasized the importance of study groups in which principals considered problems, particularly those in the critical areas of reading and mathematics, and figured out what to do about them. He commented, "This sense of organizing ourselves through study groups, action research groups, or a wide variety of practitioner-related structures is essential to making progress…"(p. 2).

Cohort experiences were utilized in both the *Principals Make the Difference…* and *Different Ways of Knowing* leadership programs. In the former, participating principals were organized into cohort groups that included principals from both districts (Jefferson County, KY and Corpus Christi, TX) who met for two years for discussion and study, with the assistance of project facilitators. Every middle school principal in both districts, thirty-six in all, joined one of six cohorts. Each group met six times over the two years and participated in a set of activities to examine their school's programs and their leadership behaviors. The design incorporated best practice for successful study groups and leadership preparation—they were small, fewer than six; a facilitator convened meetings, provoked conversation, and kept the group on task; and participants worked together to construct their own learning and design strategies for use in their own schools (Mohr, 1998; Murray, 1998; Speck, 1996). Topics studied by some of the cohorts included: ways that principals might work with teachers to improve instructional planning, examination of how principals can ensure that teacher evaluation is meaningful and productive, and how the principal works with faculty to promote quality work among students.

An external evaluation of this project (Clark & Clark, 1999) identified several lessons from this project. They included recognition of the importance of relationships developed among cohort members and with project facilitators. These comfortable relationships led to deeper conversations about teaching and learning; development among principal participants of a "long-term commitment to school reform…rather than seeking short term solutions," a "growing appreciation of reflective practice, for themselves and their staffs," an appreciation for the "opportunity to learn about programs in one another's schools, to talk with colleagues about reform issues, and to discuss strategies that will either advance or inhibit reform efforts," and a renewed commitment of principals to improving their own abilities to collect and analyze data on student achievement, and to help staff collect their own data (Educational Research Service, 2000; Williamson, 2000).

Differences in the structure of cohorts also impacted their work. When cohorts were comprised of school leaders from across districts rather from the same district, school leaders reported feeling "safe" as no one was listening to the conversations to evaluate the participants or to make decisions about their tenure. They also were able to learn that they were not "the only ones" facing certain challenges and barriers. Cross-district groups also led to invitations to visit one another's schools and to participate in regular conversations by phone. These visits and conversations stimulated additional ideas, ongoing support, and helped to reduce isolation. Similar benefits emerged when periodic cross-district networking occurred at national institutes (Clark & Clark, 1999).

On-site Coaching

Alvarado supported coaching for principals. He described its impact this way.

> You cannot change behavior, change practice in organizations, without large-scale coaching by people who know the content, who know how to do it, and who know how to help people learn. At the heart of it is the simple notion that you need someone working with you to model, to give feedback, to assist in the actual trying of the new practice, to support in the ongoing habituation of new practice. It is impossible to improve practice without access to high quality coaching. (cited in Sparks, 2000, p. 2)

In the case of both leadership projects, facilitators and/or leadership coaches "shadowed" principals in their schools. Specific activities varied. Occasionally they monitored how the principal used time, as a vehicle for principal reflection. Other times they participated in an instructional walk through with the principal. Or, they observed a principal using a specific strategy learned at a recent workshop or cohort meeting. In the *Different Ways of Knowing* project, the leadership coach worked with the principal and other school leaders on site. The most valuable aspect of the leadership coaching was to provide school leaders with insight into their work from a trusted critical friend and an opportunity to talk at length about what they do and why they do it (Chesswas, 2002). Leadership coaches recognized school leaders for their hard work. Principals spoke of the importance of someone who understood their job and the contributions of good principals (Educational Research Services, 2000). Coaching also gave school leaders the opportunity to discuss areas of their own leadership that they believed could be strengthened. Coaches were able to "pool" their findings about barriers school leaders faced, and difficulties that school leaders experienced applying skills they are learning. These cross-site learnings contributed to the design of subsequent professional development experiences.

Cross-District Networking

Reflecting on one of the projects, Doda and Williamson (2002) drew an interesting comparison between the experiences of school leaders and that of interdisciplinary teams in middle schools. While the benefits of creating interdisciplinary teams is well documented, teams run the risk of becoming "islands of isolation" and "distant from each other." Many middle level educators realize the advantages of creating structures that provide forums for open dialogue, program planning, problem solving, and building alliances across the school community. Similarly, school leaders have identified that one of the most valuable aspects of the designs analyzed here is the ability to engage in deep conversations around common themes with school leaders in other districts. Through open dialogue, in facilitated conversations, that occur over time, in "safe" environments, school leaders were able to gain new insights, solve problems, and build alliances that not only informed their own work, but also informed the larger work of middle school reform.

SUMMARY

Recognizing the importance of the principal's leadership and their commitment to school reform, the projects described here invested in strengthening the leadership capacity of middle school principals who worked in settings confronting persistent issues of low student achievement. Both projects created a structure that actively engaged principals in examining their practice, in identifying persistent school-reform issues, and constructing strategies to address those concerns.

Devoting energy to the creation of community among participants, focusing on real school issues, and providing ample time for discourse and reflection were critical attributes. The opportunity to "step away" from the day-to-day realities of school life and devote time to thoughtful analysis of persistent school problems resulted in renewed energy and commitment to reform in their schools.

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CHAPTER 14

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY

Beginning an Inquiry into the Development and Impact of Middle School Principal Leadership

Stephen Earl Lucas
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

This chapter reports some preliminary findings from the first two phases of a three-phase study of the development and impact of principal leadership in 74 principals in a state network of middle schools. The study is set within Bandura's framework of self-efficacy and the seven recommendation areas of *Turning Points 2000*. Preliminary findings indicate that there is a lack of overall and consistent relationships among school characteristics, principal demographics, principal self-ratings of leadership efficacy, and the implementation of *Turning Points 2000* recommendations in schools. These findings are being used to shape the final phase of the study in which a sample of the participating principals will be interviewed in order to determine how they have reflected upon their academic, career, and professional development experiences in order to develop middle level-specific leadership efficacy that engenders implementation of the recommendations from *Turning Points 2000*.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter shares some preliminary findings from a study of the development of leadership self-efficacy in middle school principals who were part of a state-wide middle school network located in the Midwestern United States. The study was conceptualized to be carried out in three distinct phases and, as this chapter is being written, the data collection for the first two phases has been completed and preliminary analyses are being conducted. In many ways this chapter is a "work in progress" that reflects some "thinking out loud" that the researcher is doing even as the study continues. The chapter, then, will report some of the preliminary findings, then discuss how the findings may shape both the final phase of the present study and future inquiry into the nature of principal leadership self-efficacy and the implementation of key reforms in middle level schools.

Set within Bandura's (1997) framework of triadic reciprocal causation and the most current conceptualization of effective middle level education (Jackson & Davis, 2000), this study examines:

- The educational preparation, career path, and professional development of the network's principals;
- The leadership self-efficacy of the principals in relation to the major components of effective middle-level schools;
- Teacher-reported levels of implementation of components of effective middle level practice in the network's schools;
- The processes by which principals develop leadership self-efficacy specifically related to components of effective middle level schools; and
- The processes by which middle school principal leadership self-efficacy engenders implementation of middle level design components in the network's schools.

The Study's Contexts

The Middle School Principalship

Research in the field of education has repeatedly established that the most important individual in high-achieving schools is the principal (Jackson & Davis, 2000). The degree to which a school is equipped to face challenges and seize opportunities is determined to a great extent by the knowledge, insight, commitment, and leadership possessed and exercised by the person at the heart of the organization—the principal (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2002). Schools principals of the twenty-first century must be transformational change agents who are expert in both the core technology of the school—teaching and learning—and in the shaping of the organization through collaborative leadership and decision making (Clark & Clark, 1994). Because exemplary principals are those who develop and maintain high-quality relationships with the entire school community (Bolman & Deal, 1993), the continuing development of principals positively impacts all aspects of school culture, structure, and instructional programs (Norton, 2000).

The principal's position and importance in the middle school means that he or she has the most potential to initiate and sustain improvement in academic and other areas of student performance and achievement (Jackson & Davis, 2000). This is because both the theoretical and empirical literature concerned with middle level reform hold that the multifaceted initiatives contained in the reforms require integrated implementation over an extended period of time. The multiple elements of middle level reform are intended to address, in a developmentally appropriate way, the academic, affective, and social needs of early adolescents in a way that leads to broad, positive outcomes (Erb, 2001). The most extensive empirical examinations of the results of reform measure implementation have shown, indeed, that students—including students at-risk for failure—experience significantly positive academic and affective advantages from integrated, long-term implementation efforts (Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand, & Flowers, 1997). Obviously, because middle schools are large and complex organizations, the role of principal leadership is critical in initiating and sustaining such reforms; thus, principals must possess steady commitment to the vision of the school, as well as the ability to develop and maintain a school culture favorable to continuous improvement (Clark & Clark, 2000).

In order to facilitate the vision and process of developmentally appropriate middle level education, middle school principals should be experts in early adolescent education. They should not only be conversant with the historical and philosophical underpinnings of middle level education, but also have a clear picture of the potential of effective middle schools (Clark & Clark, 1994). Ideally, of course, middle level principals should have extensive formal education and professional development experiences that specifically address the developmental needs of early adolescents, as well as the organizational implications for the schools that educate them (Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; NASSP Council on Middle Level Education, 1985). Most often this expertise is found in middle level leaders who have made the conscious choice to become principals in schools that serve early adolescents (Erb, 2001).

School leaders in general find themselves facing increasingly complex and contradictory demands; political, social, economic, and demographic challenges are creating problems, crises, and opportunities heretofore unknown (Murphy & Beck, 1994). The past twenty years in particular have seen the rise of a "manufactured crisis" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) engendered by business, political, educational, and media leaders eager to transform the school enterprise through a "conservative restoration" (Beane, 2001). Middle schools in particular are vulnerable to this movement, as they have been on the forefront of a more holistic, student-centered conception of education. Because the middle school movement of the past forty years has sought to lead the way in providing more knowledge to more students through heterogeneous grouping, integrated curriculum, instructional methods responsive to diverse learning styles, and the celebration of cultural diversity, it seems most particularly at odds with the current standards, accountability, and testing movement sweeping the nation (Beane, 2001). Thus, middle school principals in particular are situated in an educational movement characterized by innovation (i.e., the middle school movement) as well as a political and social context characterized by demands for standardization and accountability. Research about effective leadership practices within these seemingly conflicting contexts is obviously called for (Valentine, Trimble, & Whitaker, 1997).

Effective middle level principals are key for developmentally appropriate middle schools; the current political climate (i.e., of standards, testing, and accountability) makes that role even more critical. However, the most recent large-scale study of the nature of the middle level principalship shows that its current state is fragile, at best. For instance, in 2000:

- 50% of middle level principals were fifty years or older, but only 34% were that old in a 1992 study.
- 34% of middle level principals had ten or more total years of experience as a principals, but 44% had at least that much experience in 1992; in 2000, 23% had ten or more years experience as a middle level principal, while 38% were in their first three years as a middle level principal.
- 62% of middle level principals expected to leave their current principalship with three to five years; 52% of the principals expected to leave the middle level principalship entirely with those three to five years.
- Less than 1% of middle level principals had completed an undergraduate major in middle level education; 7% had completed a master's degree in middle level education; only 29% of middle level principals had completed three or more graduate level courses in middle level or early adolescent education.
- 20% of middle level principals had no experience at the middle level prior to becoming a principal; only 4% held a middle level-specific administrative certification.

Principals felt that their top priority should be the development of middle schools programs, but in terms of actual time spent on activities, program development came in fifth of nine choices (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2002).

While the middle level movement appears to be somewhat vulnerable on the political front, it is becoming increasingly robust on the philosophical front. The publication of *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) represented a significant affirmation and reconceptualization of the multiple elements of middle level reform. It is likely that this work will serve as the major structure for both middle level practice and research for the foreseeable future. In exploring both the theoretical and empirical middle level literature, *Turning Points 2000* has developed a seven-fold framework of recommendations:

- Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best.
- Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners.
- Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities.
- Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose.
- Govern democratically, through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know students best.
- Provide a safe and health school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens.
- Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

The framework of *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) has much potential for both productive practice and research. The middle level movement as a whole, however, is faced with a political environment that is antithetical to many of its key tenets and practices (Beane, 2001). In addition, the movement has historically been faced with a gap between what is espoused (and has been shown, at least on small scales) to work well for early adolescents, and what has been put into practice on a large scale; the middle school is currently experiencing "arrested development" (Dickinson, 2001). Given the strong evidence that effective principal leadership is critical at all levels of schooling, it is curious that only primarily demographic and descriptive studies of the middle level principalship have been conductive. Some works (e.g., McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 1996) provide comprehensive overviews of the progress of middle level practices but do not pointedly focus on middle level leadership. Other works that do focus on the middle school principalship (e.g., Weller, 1999) are really about generic principal leadership that happens to take place at middle schools. In one of the few recent studies that specifically examines the middle level principalship, the researchers acknowledge that both the knowledge and experience bases of today's middle school principals are lacking, and that this lack portends ineffective middle level educational programs and practices for the future (Anfara, Brown, Mills, Hartman, & Mahar, 2001). Clearly, then, there is a need for research that discovers how principals become effective leaders *specifically for middle schools.*

Leadership Self-Efficacy

This study aims at discovering how principals become effective leaders specifically for middle schools by employing Bandura's (1997) model of triadic reciprocal causation, specifically in relation to the development of leadership self-efficacy. Bandura's model posits that behavior, internal personal factors, and the environment influence each other bi-directionally. Set within the larger context of social cognitive theory, Bandura's model helps develop understanding about how individuals adapt and act within organizational settings, such as schools. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura, is "a generative capability in which cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral sub-skills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes....Self-referent thought activates cognitive, motivational, and affective processes that govern the translation of knowledge and abilities into proficient action" (Bandura, 1997, pp. 36–37). Higher levels of self-efficacy enable individuals to master increasingly difficult tasks. This study, then, is trying to discover how middle school principals, faced with the difficulties enumerated above, develop self-efficacy in regard to the leadership ability needed by the schools they serve.

Bandura's (1997) model holds that self-efficacy develops as the result of previous experience that is reflected upon thoughtfully. These experiences include enactive master events, vicarious learning, social influences, and the feedback obtained from physiological and affective states. As individuals go through these experiences, then reflect upon them, they make judgments and come to conclusions about their ability to engage in certain behaviors. This study seeks to understand the experiential backgrounds of the participating principals, as well as how their reflective thinking has contributed to their current sense of middle school leadership self-efficacy.

The sense of self-efficacy that an individual possesses influences his or her decisions about the behaviors in which he or she will engage. Cognitive, motivational, affective, and selective processes work to transform the individual's self-efficacy into action (i.e., attempts to influence the individual's environment). Organizational leaders make many complex choices in this regard because of the multifaceted nature of information, analysis, decision making, and outcomes at the organizational level (Bandura, 1997). This study seeks to understand how principals at varying levels of self-efficacy attempt to engage in leadership behaviors aimed at engendering specific middle level program characteristics in their school organizations.

Bandura (1997) states that the measurement of self-efficacy has three dimensions: level, generality, and strength, and that the most effective and predictive use of self-efficacy measurement occurs when the domains of self-efficacy are particularized. Because self-efficacy is concerned primarily with ability, rather than motivation, interview and survey protocols should employ "can do" rather than "will do" questions and prompts. Because the usefulness of self-efficacy assessment relies primarily on construct validity, it is important to be sure that the domains being evaluated are solidly placed in the field being studied. This study does this by particularizing middle school leadership self-efficacy in terms of the most current conceptualization of middle level education, *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Finally, at the outset of the study, a search of the research literature yielded four journal articles that focused directly on school principal self-efficacy. Osterman and Sullivan (1996) found that external factors such as role models, district expectations, and personal and organization support influenced principals' sense of self-efficacy, which in turn affected the principals' interpretation of organizational content and problem-solving processes. Dimmock and Hattie (1996) established that principal self-efficacy can be a powerful mediator in understanding reactions to school change. Licklider and Niska (1993) determined that principals who participate in a focused professional development program can improve their sense of self-efficacy in relation to the supervision of teachers. Finally, Imants and DeBrabander (1996) found that self-efficacy may be an important factor in explaining the underrepresentation of women in school leadership positions.

METHOD

Data Collection

Phase One

In the study's first phase, during fall 2002, all 141 principals of the middle school network were mailed a questionnaire designed to gather the following information:

- School characteristics: grade levels, total enrollment, proportion of students receiving free or reduced lunches, number of teachers on the faculty.

- Principal demographics: gender, age, and ethnicity.
- Principal education: year of graduation, major, minor, and institution for bachelor's, master's, educational specialist/advanced certificate, and doctoral degrees; number of undergraduate and graduate courses related to middle level or early adolescent education.
- Principal certification: subjects, grade levels, middle level endorsement, administrative and other non-teaching certification, and year of completion.
- Principal's professional experience: beginning and ending dates for each full-time certificated position held in a school or school district, along with the grade levels served by the school or school district.
- Principal's leadership self-efficacy: a self-rating on a ten-point scale of the principal's current ability to provide effective leadership in each of the seven major design components of the framework established in *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Of the network's 141 principals, 89 (63%) responded to either the initial mailing or one of the two follow-up mailings with a completed, usable questionnaire.

Phase Two

Each of the 89 principals who completed and returned the questionnaire was mailed a packet containing surveys for his or her teachers to complete during winter 2003. These surveys were designed to assess the degree to which the major design components from *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) were being implemented in the schools. For each of the seven components, nine items were developed that reflected that major ideas contained with that component; thus, a total of 63 items were developed. Teachers could respond to each item on a four-point Likert scale with the following choices: "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree." The survey also collected information regarding each teacher's total number of years of teaching experience, years of teaching experience at the middle level, and years of teaching at their current school. Of the 89 principals who received packets of surveys for their school's teachers, 74 (83%) returned completed surveys; a total of 2356 teachers (an average of 31.8 per school) completed surveys. The completion rate for the teacher surveys (of a possible 3316 surveys in the 74 schools) was 71%.

Phase Three

Each principal who returned the packet of completed teacher surveys was mailed a letter to ascertain their willingness and availability for structured interviews. As this chapter is being written, the interviews for this phase are being scheduled, and will be conducted at the school sites of the participating principals during the late spring and early summer of 2003.

Analyses

For the purposes of reporting preliminary findings in this chapter and shaping the data collection to be done in the interview phase of the study, several analyses are being performed. From the principal questionnaire (phase one), descriptive statistics were generated for school characteristics, principal demographics, and principal leadership self-efficacy. Additionally, the number of years of middle level experience was calculated based upon the information each principal provided in listing his or her full-time positions in certificated positions in schools.

From the teacher survey (phase two), descriptive statistics were generated for each of the three items related to total teaching and middle level teaching experience, as well as the number of years at the current school. Descriptive statistics for the 63 items (nine in each of seven areas) developed from the recommendations of *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) were also generated. Additionally, the nine items within each of the seven sets were averaged to produce a perceived level of implementation score for each teacher for each recommendation. In turn, the seven implementation scores were averaged to produce a score reflective of each teacher's perception of the total implementation of the recommendations. Finally, each of the recommendation and total implementation scores were averaged for each school to yield a school-level set of implementations scores for each of the seven recommendation areas as well as a total implementation score.

Finally, a number of correlative analyses are being conducted to determine if any relationships existed among school characteristics, principal demographics, education, professional experience, leadership self-efficacy, and implementation scores for the seven recommendation areas. These analyses are being conducted to determine if there are any expected (or unexpected) relationships among these measures that might be explored in more depth and detail during the upcoming interview phase of the study.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The preliminary results being reported in this section are based on the data returned by the schools that participated in the first two phases of the study, that is, completed both the principal's questionnaire and the teacher's survey. A total of 74 of the network's 141 schools (52%) completed both of the first two phases.

Descriptive Analyses

School Characteristics

Of the 74 schools, 78% contained grades 6, 7, and 8, 18% contained grades 7 and 8, and 4% contained grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. School enrollment ranged from 204 students to 1291 students, with a mean of 611 students. The average percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunches was 34%, with a range from 0% to 97%. The average number of teachers per school was 45, with a minimum of 16 and a maximum of 85.

Principal Demographics and Education

Principals ranged in age from 30 to 65 years, with a mean of 47.5 years. 84% of the principals were Caucasian, 10% were African-American, 5% were Hispanic, and 1% was Caucasian-Hispanic. 64% of the principals were male, and 36% were female. Three of the 74 principals did not report their educational preparation; of the remaining 71 principals, all reported holding both bachelor's and master's degrees; the average date of completion for bachelor's degrees was 1977, and for master's degrees was 1986. Of the 71 reporting principals, 30% held either educational specialist or advanced certificate degrees, with the average date of completion of 1994; 17% held doctoral degrees, with the average date of completion being 1997. The mean number of completed undergraduate courses focused on middle level or early adolescent education was 1.7, with minimum of 0 and a maximum of 12. At the graduate level, the mean number of similar courses completed was 1.2, with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 10.

Principal Tenure, Experience, and Middle Level Experience

Principals in the 74 schools had served a mean of 5.62 years in their current positions, with the reported number of years ranging from one to twenty. The mean number of years of experience in education was 23.9 years, with the reported number of years ranging from 2 to 38. Using data reported by the principals, "years of middle level experience" was calculated by determining what proportion of each organizational setting (e.g., school or school district) in which the principal had served consisted of middle grades as defined by the middle level network, that is, grades four through eight. For example, for each year that a participant served as a principal in a K–8 building, he or she would be credited with .56 years of middle level experience (five years divided by nine years). Using this formula, the total years of middle level experience was calculated by summing the middle level experience for each position held throughout the principal's career. For the 74 participants, the mean number of years of middle level experience was 15.9 years, with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 32.9 years. The descriptive statistics for principal demographics, education, tenure, experience, and middle level experience are summarized in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1. Descriptive Statistics for Participating Principals and Their Schools (n = 74)

	Minimum	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Age	30	65	47.5	7.2
Undergraduate middle level courses	0	12	1.7	2.7
Graduate middle level courses	0	10	1.2	1.8
Tenure at present school (years)	1	20	5.6	4.7
Total educational experience	2	38	23.9	7.4
Total middle level experience	1	32.9	15.9	7.8
School enrollment	204	1,291	611	257
Percent free/reduced lunch students	0	97	34	27.7
Number of school faculty	16	85	44.8	17.8

Principal Leadership Self-efficacy

Tables 14.2 and 14.3 summarize the principals' responses to the items which asked them to rate the level (on a scale of 1 to 10) of their current ability to provide effective leadership in each of the seven recommendation areas of *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), as well as their overall ability to provide leadership for the implementation of effective middle level practices. Within the seven recommendations areas, the highest mean reported level of leadership self-efficacy was in "healthy school environment," followed (in descending order) by "faculty staffing and professional development," "collaborative leadership practices," "organizational practices for relationships," "instructional practices," "standards, curriculum, and assessment," and "involving families and the community."

Table 14.2. Descriptive Statistics for Principal Leadership Self-efficacy (1 = very low, 10 = very high) (n = 74)

Recommendation area	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Implementation of *standards, curriculum, and assessment practices* that lead to improved student learning.	5	10	7.89	1.28
Instructional practices that that help all students to learn the curriculum, do well on assessments, and explore their interests.	5	10	8.00	1.01

Table 14.2. Descriptive Statistics for Principal Leadership Self-efficacy (1 = very low, 10 = very high) (n = 74) (Cont.)

Recommendation area	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Faculty staffing and professional development practices that enable teachers to help early adolescent students succeed academically and socially.	5	10	8.15	1.14
Implementing *organizational practices* (such as teaming and advisory programs) that enable students to have quality *relationships* with both their peers and with the school's adults.	4	10	8.05	1.45
Authentically *collaborative leadership practices*, including the development of a school-wide vision and improvement plan that has broad faculty support.	5	10	8.12	1.12
A *healthy school environment* that ensures that each student is physically and psychologically safe, knows and practices healthy living, and has access to a wide range of school and community-based health services.	3	10	8.27	1.35
Proactively *involving families and the community* in the life of the school, as well as developing opportunities for students to become involved in the community surrounding the school.	3	10	7.26	1.73
Overall implementation of middle level practices at your school.	3	10	8.42	1.29

Table 14.3. Distribution (in percent) of Principal Leadership Self-efficacy Ratings (1 = very low, 10 = very high) (n = 74)

	Principal leadership self-efficacy rating									
Recommendation area	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Standards, curriculum, assessment	0	0	0	0	3	14	18	37	18	12
Instructional practices	0	0	0	0	1	5	19	47	20	7
Faculty staffing and professional development	0	0	0	0	3	7	11	41	29	10
Organizational practices for relationships	0	0	0	3	4	7	14	34	23	16
Collaborative leadership practices	0	0	0	0	3	4	19	37	28	10
Healthy school environment	0	0	1	0	1	6	17	25	32	17
Involving families and the community	0	0	4	1	11	11	24	20	20	7
Overall implementation of middle level practices	0	0	1	0	1	3	11	35	28	21

Teacher Perceptions of Implementation of Recommendations

Table 14.4 summarizes the teachers' responses (aggregated within the seven recommendation areas and at the school level) to the items which asked them to rate the degree to which they perceived that recommendations from *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) were currently being implemented at their schools. Within the seven recommendations areas, the highest mean of perceived implementation was in "standards, curriculum, and assessment practices," followed in descending order by "instructional practices," "organizational practices for relationships," "collaborative leadership practices," "healthy school environment," "faculty staffing and professional development," and "involving families and community."

Table 14.4. Teachers' Perceptions of the Degree to which Recommendations from *Turning Points 2000* are Implemented in Their School (aggregated within recommendation areas and at the school level [1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree]) (n = 74)

Recommendation area	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Standards, curriculum, assessment	2.56	3.59	3.12	0.20
Instructional practices	2.56	3.54	3.06	0.19
Faculty staffing and professional development	2.19	3.34	2.87	0.22
Organizational practices for relationships	2.03	3.41	3.04	0.26
Collaborative leadership practices	2.06	3.51	3.00	0.27
Healthy school environment	2.17	3.36	2.89	0.25
Involving families and the community	1.98	3.42	2.78	0.24
Overall implementation of middle level practices	2.29	3.41	2.97	0.21

Correlative Analyses

A number of correlative analyses were conducted to determine relationships, first, between school characteristics and, respectively, principal leadership self-efficacy and *Turning Points 2000* implementation. Next, correlative analyses were conducted to determine relationships between principal demographics (age, number of years in current principalship, total years of educational experience, and years of middle level experience) and, respectively, principal leadership self-efficacy and *Turning Points 2000* implementation. Finally, correlative analyses were conducted to determine relationships between principal leadership self-efficacy and *Turning Points 2000* implementation. All correlative analyses were conducted with the data aggregated at the school level ($n = 74$).

School Characteristics

Correlations were calculated between the school characteristic variables and the principals' reported level of leadership self-efficacy in relation to the *Turning Points 2000* recommendations (Table 14.5). Significant positive correlations were found between school enrollment and principal leadership self-efficacy in "faculty staffing and professional development" ($r = .22$, $p < .05$), "collaborative leadership practices" ($r = .24$, $p < .05$), and "involving families and the community" ($r = .25$, $p < .05$). Significant positive correlations were also found between the size of the teaching faculty and principal leadership self-efficacy in "collaborative leadership practices" ($r = .24$, $p < .05$) and "involving families and the community" ($r = .22$, $p < .05$). And, a significant positive correlation was found between the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch and principal leadership self-efficacy in "faculty staffing and professional development" ($r = .26$, $p < .05$).

Table 14.5. Correlations between School Characteristics and Principals' Reported Level of Leadership Self-efficacy (n = 74)

Recommendation area	*School Enrollment*	*Size of Teaching Faculty*	*% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch*
Standards, curriculum, assessment	$r = .11$ $p = .31$	$r = .08$ $p = .49$	$r = -.02$ $p = .85$
Instructional practices	$r = .06$ $p = .55$	$r = -.03$ $p = .81$	$r = .13$ $p = .25$
Faculty staffing and professional development	$r = .22$* $p = .04$	$r = .15$ $p = .17$	$r = .26$* $p = .02$
Organizational practices for relationships	$r = .12$ $p = .25$	$r = .14$ $p = .19$	$r = .05$ $p = .66$
Collaborative leadership practices	$r = .24$* $p = .02$	$r = .24$* $p = .03$	$r = .09$ $p = .41$
Healthy school environment	$r = .11$ $p = .32$	$r = .03$ $p = .78$	$r = -.03$ $p = .78$
Involving families and the community	$r = .25$* $p = .02$	$r = .22$* $p = .05$	$r = -.04$ $p = .74$
Overall implementation of middle level practices	$r = .10$ $p = .35$	$r = .10$ $p = .36$	$r = .04$ $p = .78$

* Significant at $p < .05$.

Correlations were also calculated between the school characteristic variables (enrollment, number of teachers, and percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch) and the teacher-perceived levels of implementation of the *Turning Points 2000* recommendations (Table 14.6). There were no significant correlative relations between school enrollment and implementation nor between the number of teachers on the faculty and implementation. Statistically significant negative correlations were found between the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch and the implementation of "healthy school environment" ($r = -.34$, $p < .01$) and "involving parents and community" ($r = -.31$, $p < .01$).

Table 14.6. Correlations between School Characteristics and *Turning Points 2000* Implementation (n = 74)

Recommendation area	*School Enrollment*	*Size of Teaching Faculty*	*% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch*
Standards, curriculum, assessment	$r = -.11$ $p = .34$	$r = .04$ $p = .73$	$r = -.18$ $p = .12$
Instructional practices	$r = -.02$ $p = .87$	$r = .16$ $p = .19$	$r = -.16$ $p = .17$
Faculty staffing and professional development	$r = .03$ $p = .83$	$r = .17$ $p = .16$	$r = -.04$ $p = .75$
Organizational practices for relationships	$r = .08$ $p = .50$	$r = .15$ $p = .21$	$r = -.07$ $p = .57$
Collaborative leadership practices	$r = -.06$ $p = .61$	$r = .06$ $p = .62$	$r = -.19$ $p = .11$
Healthy school environment	$r = .00$ $p = .99$	$r = .09$ $p = .44$	$r = -.34$** $p = .003$
Involving families and the community	$r = .08$ $p = .51$	$r = .19$ $p = .11$	$r = -.31$** $p = .007$
Overall implementation of middle level practices	$r = .00$ $p = .99$	$r = .14$ $p = .24$	$r = -.21$ $p = .08$

** Significant at $p < .01$.

Principal Demographics

Correlations were calculated between principal demographic characteristics (age, number of years in current principalship, total years of educational experience, and years of middle level experience) and principal leadership self-efficacy in relation to the *Turning Points 2000* recommendations (Table 14.7). Significant positive correlations were found between principal age and leadership self-efficacy for "faculty staffing and professional development" ($r = .24$, $p = .03$), "organizational practices for relationships" ($r = .23$, $p = .04$), and "overall implementation of middle level practices" ($r = .24$, $p = .03$). No significant correlations were found between numbers of years in current principalship, total years of educational experience, years of middle level experience, and any of the areas of principal leadership self-efficacy.

Table 14.7. Correlations between Principal Demographics and Principal Leadership Self-efficacy (n= 74)

Recommendation area	*Age*	*Years in current principalship*	*Total educational experience*	*Middle level experience*
Standards, curriculum, assessment	$r = .09$ $p = .44$	$r = -.06$ $p = .56$	$r = .00$ $p = 1.00$	$r = -.02$ $p = .85$
Instructional practices	$r = .06$ $p = .62$	$r = -.15$ $p = .18$	$r = .00$ $p = 1.00$	$r = -.12$ $p = .29$
Faculty staffing and professional development	$r = .24$* $p = .03$	$r = .02$ $p = .85$	$r = .14$ $p = .21$	$r = .13$ $p = .25$
Organizational practices for relationships	$r = .23$* $p = .04$	$r = .19$ $p = .07$	$r = .16$ $p = .15$	$r = .12$ $p = .28$
Collaborative leadership practices	$r = .19$ $p = .09$	$r = .08$ $p = .45$	$r = .15$ $p = .17$	$r = -.01$ $p = .97$
Healthy school environment	$r = .16$ $p = .15$	$r = .06$ $p = .56$	$r = .05$ $p = .64$	$r = -.08$ $p = .49$
Involving families and the community	$r = .05$ $p = .65$	$r = -.04$ $p = .72$	$r = .05$ $p = .66$	$r = -.06$ $p = .59$
Overall implementation of middle level practices	$r = .24$* $p = .03$	$r = .17$ $p = .11$	$r = .13$ $p = .25$	$r = .16$ $p = .15$

* Significant at $p < .05$.

Correlations were also calculated between principal demographic characteristics (age, number of years in current principalship, total years of educational experience, and years of middle level experience) and the teacher-perceived levels of implementation of the *Turning Points 2000* recommendations (Table 14.8). No significant correlations were found between any principal demographic characteristics and the teacher-perceived levels of implementation.

Principal Leadership Self-efficacy and Turning Points 2000 Implementation

Finally, correlations were calculated between the principal-reported levels of leadership self-efficacy and the corresponding teacher-perceived levels of implementation of the *Turning Points 2000* recommendations (Table 14.9). Significant positive correlations were found between principal leadership self-efficacy and implementation in "standards, curriculum, and assessment" ($r = .26$, $p = .03$) and "overall implementation of middle level practices" ($r = .24$, $p = .04$).

Table 14.8. Correlations between Principal Demographics and *Turning Points 2000* Implementation

Recommendation area	*Age (n = 71)*	*Years in current principalship (n = 74)*	*Total educational experience (n = 72)*	*Middle level experience (n = 72)*
Standards, curriculum, assessment	$r = -.01$ $p = .96$	$r = .15$ $p = .19$	$r = .06$ $p = .60$	$r = .01$ $p = .96$
Instructional practices	$r = .03$ $p = .81$	$r = .17$ $p = .14$	$r = .11$ $p = .35$	$r = .04$ $p = .74$
Faculty staffing and professional development	$r = -.01$ $p = .91$	$r = .15$ $p = .19$	$r = .08$ $p = .52$	$r = .07$ $p = .57$
Organizational practices for relationships	$r = .04$ $p = .73$	$r = .20$ $p = .10$	$r = .05$ $p = .68$	$r = .09$ $p = .45$
Collaborative leadership practices	$r = -.05$ $p = .66$	$r = .11$ $p = .35$	$r = -.01$ $p = .94$	$r = -.01$ $p = .97$
Healthy school environment	$r = -.08$ $p = .53$	$r = .09$ $p = .46$	$r = -.06$ $p = .60$	$r = .01$ $p = .90$
Involving families and the community	$r = -.10$ $p = .39$	$r = .08$ $p = .49$	$r = -.03$ $p = .82$	$r = -.01$ $p = .93$
Overall implementation of middle level practices	$r = -.02$ $p = .87$	$r = .17$ $p = .15$	$r = .04$ $p = .72$	$r = .04$ $p = .72$

Table 14.9. Correlations between Principal Leadership Self-efficacy and Teacher-perceived Implementation of *Turning Points 2000* Recommendations (n = 74)

Recommendation area	*n*	*r*	*p*
Standards, curriculum, assessment	74	.26*	.03
Instructional practices	74	.10	.39
Faculty staffing and professional development	73	.08	.51
Organizational practices for relationships	74	.16	.16
Collaborative leadership practices	74	.07	.57
Healthy school environment	71	.07	.57
Involving families and the community	70	.03	.79
Overall implementation of middle level practices	72	.24*	.04

* Significant at $p < .05$

DISCUSSION AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

In general, the descriptive analyses of both school characteristics and principal demographics revealed that the 74 participating schools and principals mirrored the findings of the most recent national survey of middle level schools and principals (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2002). The "average" or "typical" school in this study was a grades 6–7–8 building that had 45 teachers and an enrollment of just over 600 students, 34% of whom were eligible for free or reduced lunch status. An examination of the geographic locations of the schools indicated that the distribution of the schools among urban, suburban, and rural locales was not noticeably different than that of the statewide network of 141 schools. The "typical" principal was a white male of about 47 years of age with 24 years of experience in education, 16 of those years at the middle level, and about 5.5 years tenure in the principalship of the school. The typical principal had taken just under a total of three courses (undergraduate and graduate combined) that focused on early adolescent or middle level education.

Turning to the focus of this multi-part study, it is informative to first compare the rank orders of principal leadership self-efficacy and teacher-perceived implementation levels for the seven recommendation areas of *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). For instance, while principals considered themselves capable of providing the most efficacious leadership in the area of "healthy school environment," teachers perceived that this recommendation area was only fifth in rank order of implementation. Conversely, while teachers perceived that the recommendations regarding "standards, curriculum, and assessment" were being implemented at the highest levels, principals considered that their leadership self-efficacy in this area was the second lowest among the seven. In only one area of recommendations ("involving parents and community") was there complete congruence between the rank orders of principal leadership self-efficacy and teacher-perceived implementation levels—both principals and teachers ranked this area at the bottom. An examination of Table 14.10 further reveals that only "collaborative leadership practices" and "organizational practices for relationships" were within one rank-order of each other, and that all other recommendation areas were three ("instructional practices"), four ("healthy school environment," "faculty staffing and professional development") or five ("standards, curriculum, and assessment") rank orders apart. Clearly, in terms of comparative rank orders, there is a lack of overall congruence between principal leadership self-efficacy and teacher-perceived implementation levels.

Next, it is interesting to note that the preliminary correlative analyses confirm the lack of congruence revealed in the comparison of rank orders. In only one recommendation area—"standards, curriculum, and assess-

Table 14.10. Comparison of Rank Order of Principal Leadership Self-efficacy and Teacher-perceived Implementation of *Turning Points 2000* Recommendations

Order	*Principal Leadership Self-Efficacy*	*Teacher-Perceived Implementation Level*
1 (highest)	Healthy school environment	Standards, curriculum, and assessment
2	Faculty staffing and professional development	Instructional practices
3	Collaborative leadership practices	Organizational practices for relationships
4	Organizational practices for relationships	Collaborative leadership practices
5	Instructional practices	Healthy school environment
6	Standards, curriculum, and assessment	Faculty staffing and professional development
7 (lowest)	Involving families and the community	Involving families and the community

ment"—was there a statistically significant relationship to be found. What is puzzling, however, is that this positive correlation ($r = .26$) was found in the very area in which the greatest discrepancy was found in the comparative rank orders of principal leadership self-efficacy and teacher-perceived implementation levels. Additionally, a significant positive correlation ($r = .24$) was found between the principals' leadership self-efficacy ratings and the teachers' perceived ratings for overall implementation of the recommendations. This, too, is puzzling in light of the lack of congruence within the seven specific recommendation areas.

These puzzling results have caused the researcher to begin thinking about how some of the significant correlational relationships revealed among school characteristics, principal demographics, principal leadership self-efficacy, and teacher-perceived implementation levels might be informative in shaping the final (interview) phase of the study. For instance:

- Why are there significant positive correlations between school size and principal leadership self-efficacy in "faculty staffing and professional development," "collaborative leadership practices," and "involving families and the community" but not the other four recommendation areas and not the overall sense of leadership self-efficacy?
- In regard to the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, why is there only one area of principal leadership self-efficacy ("faculty staffing and professional development") with a significant (and positive) correlation?

- Why are there no significant correlations between either school size or size of teaching faculty and perceived implementation, yet there are significant negative correlations between the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch and the perceived implementation of "health school environment" and "involving parents and the community" recommendations?
- In regard to principal age, number of years in current principalship, and total and middle-level experience, why are there only significant (and positive) correlations between principal age and principal leadership self-efficacy in "faculty staffing and professional development," "organizational practices for relationships," and "overall implementation of middle level practices"?
- Finally, why are there *no* significant relationships between principal age, years in current principalship, total and middle-level educational experience and implementation levels of *any* of the seven recommendation areas, as well as the overall implementation level?

In designing this study, the researcher was very interested in specifically determining how middle level principals developed, through their educational preparation, career experiences, and professional development, a sense of leadership self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) specific to the implementation of middle level practices as explicated in *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). The preliminary analyses—as well as the questions posed above—might seem disappointing at first glance; there don't seem to be any important (or at least consistent) relationships between the measures principal characteristics (e.g., age and experience), principal self-efficacy, and implementation of middle level recommendations. However, further reflection upon Bandura's model of the development of self-efficacy may provide clues that will help explain these results. Bandura's model of triadic reciprocal causation asserts that it is the interaction of behavior, internal personal factors, and the environment that is important. The first two phases of this study—primarily the collection of principal leadership self-efficacy ratings and teacher-perceived implementation scores—merely sets the table for examining how middle level principals have both experienced and reflected upon academic, career, and developmental experiences in order to create their present levels of middle level leadership self-efficacy.

Stated another way, the very *lack* of overall and consistent relationships among principal characteristics, leadership self-efficacy, and middle level recommendation implementation may be the key to formulating guiding questions for the interview phase of the study—the phase in which participating principals will be asked to both recount and reflect upon the academic, career, and developmental experiences that have led to their present sense of middle level leadership self-efficacy. These preliminary analyses, then, mean that the researcher will need carefully investigate during the interview phase of the study the following issues, among others:

> How have middle level principals navigated through various academic, career, and developmental experiences to arrive in their current principalships as well as their sense of leadership self-efficacy?
>
> To what degree have middle level principals reflected actively upon their prior experiences to develop leadership self-efficacy?
>
> How do levels of principal age, educational experience, and middle level experience relate to leadership self-efficacy? Is gender a possible factor here as well?
>
> Having developed a sense of leadership self-efficacy in relation to middle level reform recommendations, how do principals exercise leadership behaviors in order to bring about middle level reform in their buildings?
>
> How do the results of those leadership efforts, in turn, affect the principals' sense of leadership self-efficacy in relationship to middle level reform?
>
> Why do principals develop levels of leadership self-efficacy that vary among the seven recommendation areas of *Turning Points 2000*? Do age, gender, total educational and middle level-specific experience contribute to these variations?
>
> In the opinion of the participating principals themselves, how important is their sense of middle level leadership self-efficacy in relation to the implementation of middle level reform in their schools?
>
> Is there, in fact, a *specifically* middle level principalship about which we can develop knowledge and recommendations in order to facilitate the furtherance of middle level reform? If so, upon what can we legitimately base that knowledge and those recommendations?

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shared the preliminary results of a study, still in progress, designed to begin the investigation of principal leadership specific to middle level education. To this point in the investigation, the primarily quantitative results have led to the development of further questions that must be investigated qualitatively. The upcoming interviews of principals will be designed to probe, in depth, the relationships among their experiences, their sense of self-efficacy specific to the middle level principalship, and the practices in which they engage to bring about middle level reform in their schools. It is hoped that the final phase will provide at least some preliminary answers to the question of middle level principal self-efficacy and, perhaps more importantly, significant new questions that will guide further, more intricate explorations into this area of inquiry.

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CHAPTER 15

A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL URBAN SCHOOL LEADERS

**Sue C. Thompson, Donna M. Davis, Loyce Caruthers,
and Larry Gregg**
University of Missouri, Kansas City

ABSTRACT

One of the missions of the University of Missouri, Kansas City is to serve the community in which it resides. It is the responsibility of the higher education community to challenge the status quo and the social-deficit theory that contends that children from impoverished communities cannot be successful in schools because of inferior home and community life (Sanders, 1999).

Being knowledgeable about good middle school theory and practice is critically important but not enough for aspiring middle school leaders. "Undiscussables" related to issues of race/ethnicity, gender, and class have to be at the heart of the dialogue concerning middle school reculturing. This is the story of one division in the School of Education that is committed to changing the way it develops leaders for urban schools.

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INTRODUCTION

The University of Missouri, Kansas City (UMKC) is located in the heart of the Kansas City, Missouri School District. The Kansas City, Missouri School District is an urban district with many challenges; indeed, it is a large, unwieldy, bureaucratic, and politically-charged system, many of the students are poor and exhibit a hopelessness that often accompanies poverty, and there is a high rate of crime in the community. One of the goals of UMKC is to serve the surrounding community and the schools that work to educate students in this urban district and other urban profile districts in the metropolitan Kansas City area. It is the mission of the higher education community to challenge the status quo and the social-deficit theory that contends that children from improvised communities cannot be successful in school because of inferior home and community life (Sanders, 1999).

Many urban K–12 schools are filled with stories about how good the school "used to be" and students who are not attaining the academic competence necessary to compete successfully in a highly demanding global economy. If urban schools in trouble are to make substantive transformational changes, they need leaders who are willing to *reculture* the school in order to meet the needs of the students they serve (Thompson & Gregg, 1997). "The culture of an organization can determine, to a large degree, what we will believe (and disbelieve) and how we will view the events in our lives" (Thompson, 2002, p. 226). Bower (1966) describes *culture* as the way business is done in an organization. *Reculturing* is defined as changes that occur as a result of educators reflecting upon, evaluating, and expanding their own mental models regarding the education of young people. Mental models are the images, assumptions, and stories that individuals carry within their own minds about themselves, other people, institutions, and every aspect of the world. These mental models shape how one acts and are often untested and unexamined (Senge, 1990). With this in mind, educators may expand their mental models about urban learners, thus creating collective mental models or visions that result in positive change.

The idea is to create schools that are high performing and socially equitable—a notion forwarded in the vision statement of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform (2002):

> High-performing schools with middle grades are *socially equitable*. They seek to keep their students' future options open. They have high expectations for all their students and are committed to helping each child produce work of high quality. These schools make sure that all students are in academically rigorous classes staffed by experienced and expertly prepared teachers. These teachers acknowledge and honor their students' histories and cultures. They work to educate every child well and to overcome systemic variation in resources and outcomes related to race, class, gender, and ability.

> They engage their communities in supporting all students' learning and growth (p. TR-17).

The Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education (ULAPSE) division in the School of Education at UMKC believes it takes bold and courageous school leaders who are willing to challenge their own beliefs to create middle schools that are both high performing and socially equitable. ULAPSE felt it could not participate in actively promoting the sorting and screening—relative to achievement—of students by race, ethnic group, class, and gender that is so prevalent in many urban settings. In order to graduate aspiring middle level administrators that understand and embrace the ideas of social justice, every course taken in the ULAPSE program of study must support this end.

With this in mind, the ULAPSE division adopted a work philosophy that involved discussing the "undiscussables" in education—issues surrounding race/ethnicity, class, and gender—and working solely on creating systems that would allow all children to flourish. Only through honest dialogue about these undiscussables could the division get at the heart of reculturing schools in Kansas City. To be sure, the Kansas City, Missouri School District has a long history of racial and economic turmoil, and its desegregation case, *Missouri v. Jenkins*, still evokes feelings of mistrust and suspicion among district personnel, parents, and teachers (Davis, 2002). Because the issue of race has been at the core of the conflict, it has become necessary that our work reflect the need to critically examine the emotional ramifications of reculturing. Consequently, aspiring school leaders in the program have to be able to facilitate dialogues about very difficult issues. One teacher in a middle school who is in the ULAPSE program said:

> I was actually able to use the things that we discussed in my ULAPSE classes as part of the faculty meeting I facilitated today. For the first time in six years that I have been a part of that school, teachers had meaningful dialogue about personal values and beliefs regarding students, teacher responsibilities, and what should be occurring in school. Teachers had time for personal reflection and dialogue. As I was facilitating, I heard teachers challenging others: 'Do you really believe that?' as well as discovering things they had in common with each other. (personal communication, October 21, 2002)

Although Missouri does not have a licensure program for middle level administrators, the state does require that all middle level administrators be certified in middle level administration. In order to be certified as a middle school administrator in the state of Missouri, students must successfully complete two courses, *Adolescent Development* and *Middle School Administration*, in addition to completing an education administration program like that offered through the ULAPSE division. This program at UMKC (see Appendix) includes eighteen hours of Block courses (these provide the foundation for all other coursework in the program), as well as courses in curriculum design, research, school supervision, education foundations, and school law. Students also complete a practicum. The *Middle School Administration* and *Adolescent Development* courses alone, obviously, would not produce middle level administrators who can affect change. Thus, all courses offered in the ULAPSE program and that are required for middle level certification adhere to a conceptual framework that is constructivist in nature and includes an emphasis on social equity.

Approximately a decade ago, the division redesigned its K–12 principal preparation program to be more responsive to new challenges in schooling, particularly in urban settings, with a focus on learning organizations becoming critical to improving student and staff learning in schools. Aspiring leaders in urban profile districts attend UMKC for principal preparation as do prospective leaders from more affluent suburban districts in surrounding communities, allowing for great diversity among program participants.

The leadership program at UMKC relies on a theoretical framework that recognizes the need for a comprehensive definition of education that includes the psychological, social, and cultural processes that are a part of a child's experiences. Indeed, work in the division is founded on the philosophical notion that all children—all individuals—bring a wealth of information or prior knowledge to the educational setting, and one of the goals of the program is to recognize and honor the significance of culture. Thus, education is defined as, "the entire process by which human beings develop a sense of self and formulate an identity, learn the ways of society so that they may function within it, and define and transmit their culture from one generation to the next" (Hiner, 1990, p. 138). This definition of education encourages school leaders to understand their critical role in shaping the identity of their students, and in doing so, they acknowledge the importance of accepting student and community culture.

The ULAPSE educational administration program reflects the belief that schools succeed or fail based on the quality of their leadership. Successful schooling for poor and minority children who often reside in urban settings has never been more urgent and is being inadequately addressed. In some cases, educational practices border on being in a state of malpractice, as students fall severely below state mandated levels of competency and achievement. This has surely been the case in Kansas City, where full state accreditation and approval continues to be elusive. Indeed, the Kansas City, Missouri School District was stripped of its state accreditation in 2000 specifically because of poor student performance on standardized tests. After meeting four of eleven required goals for accreditation, the district achieved limited (probationary) approval a year later. Test scores, however, remain questionable at best. In order to renew and reculture urban schools through responsive and well-educated leaders with the necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions, the ULAPSE division operates under the following conceptual framework that is grounded in constructivist learning theory. According to Walker and Lambert (1995):

> While John Dewey did not use the term constructivism, certainly his ideas contributed to the formulation of constructivist theories of learning and leading. Dewey (1916) first gave voice to this view of learning, noting that students must learn and make sense of new knowledge together, based on their individual and collective experiences. He perceived learning as a social endeavor, and his ideas about instruction can be found in current models of cooperative learning that emphasize the social construction of knowledge. His early notions of shared decision-making shaped evolving notions of schools as communities of learners and leaders and also contributed to the emerging theory of constructivist leadership. (p. 19)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

With the theory of constructivism in mind, the following set of working assumptions guide the UMKC Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education program. All decisions relative to the program are based on these working assumptions. These assumptions provide the basis for the program's conceptual framework; thus, program faculty strive to:

1. **Create meaningful educational processes and experiences**

   If we accept that all experiences are educational and that students will make meaning from them, our role is to create opportunities to have these experiences build upon themselves in such a way that students are able to experience intellectual freedom—the freedom to explore their worlds, act on their natural impulses, and be guided by teachers who shape learning environments that do not inhibit individual thought. Indeed Dewey (1938) states that "the only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence" and that authentic education is that which allows the child to experience growth (p. 348). Further, we acknowledge that school teachers and leaders assist children in their development of self and identity, and that it is important to honor what children already know and can do.

2. **Promote diversity, equity, and social justice**

   Public schools have a responsibility to educate all children well. As an institution responsible for the preparation of school leaders who will work in increasingly diverse settings, UMKC must prepare leaders that not only accept diversity but honor and value diversity. Honoring diversity and promoting equity and social justice is the foundation of the ULAPSE program, as we embrace the idea that schools can be places where children are not powerless in the educational setting, but central to everything that happens there.

3. **Develop transformational/constructivist leaders**

   Transformational/constructivist leaders think differently about leadership. Tranformational leadership as defined by Burns (1978) occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. According to Lambert, et al. (1995), constructivist leadership occurs when leaders provide opportunities for people to become engaged in the processes that create the conditions for learning and finding common ground about learning and teaching.

4. **Create democratic classrooms and schools**

   Transformational/constructivist leaders understand that one of the purposes of education is to create an informed citizenry that will support a democratic way of life. Cunat (1996) defines democratic education as "the vital and dynamic process of a learning community that recognizes the individuality and responsibility of each participant" (p. 36). Leaders must provide opportunities for students, staff, and parents to have a meaningful voice in the way their schools are governed, in learning experiences, in assessments, and in community relations. Valuing diverse voices requires understanding and recognizing issues of power and using one's voice to improve outcomes for urban students. Leaders must have the moral and ethical values to promote the common good in schools that value and practice democracy on a day-to-day basis. Further, they must be able to articulate and justify those values to all constituents.

5. **Create learning organizations**

   Leaders must understand how the development of a learning organization influences student achievement and student success. They must be able to create a learning organization that fosters both adult and student learning and expands the definition of leadership to include all stakeholders in the school. They must be willing to examine the culture of the school and be courageous in challenging those practices and programs based on beliefs that no longer serve the school, students, faculty, parents, and community well.

6. **Emphasize the significance of relationships**

   Relationships are vitally important to the well being of every person in the school community, that is, students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Relationships can either promote a collaborative work culture or inhibit the development of a collaborative work culture. Leaders must have the interpersonal skills to interact successfully with all constituents of the school community and build trusting relationships in order to create a highly functioning school. Trustful relationships create a safe space where the undiscussables related to race/ethnicity, class, and gender can be brought out in the open for reflection, sharing, and dialogue.

7. **Use technology to enhance educational experiences**

   The ULAPSE program is committed to identifying strategies for implementing technology where appropriate. Beyond the traditional uses that include data collection, analysis and research support, applying and assessing current technologies for school management, business procedures, and scheduling, the division relies on "virtual coaching" through weekly e-mail journaling and the use of Blackboard (an online instructional tool) to establish discussion groups and chat rooms for students.

8. **Demonstrate reflective practice**

   While the ULAPSE program focuses on the use of reflective practice, it is understood that reflection in isolation is not enough. Leaders must not only have the ability to reflect critically on practices in their school, they must create a school culture that truly embraces social interaction where new meanings can be formulated that are richer, broader, and fuller. Reflection, sharing, inquiry, and dialogue must become norms of the school culture.

9. **Focus on school change and reculturing**

   Change takes place within the context of the school culture and leaders must understand not only how to promote dynamic and systemic reform but how to reculture schools. Again, reculturing is defined as changes that occur as a result of educators reflecting upon, evaluating, and expanding their own mental models regarding the education of young people (Senge, 1990). Schools can be recultured if people are willing to unlearn complex beliefs and assumptions that underlie behavior. In other words, leaders must be able to change stories about urban schools.

Programmatic Structure and Curriculum Framework

Program Faculty

The educational leadership faculty is a diverse group of professors with equal distribution between women and men, as well as race/ethnicity. This diversity allows the division to act on the principles emphasized in the courses that we teach. One of the norms in our division is to discuss the undiscussables among ourselves and challenge each others' assumptions and beliefs. The faculty in the ULAPSE division also work collaboratively across disciplines of leadership and sociological, cultural, historical and philosophical foundations to address the assumptions of the conceptual framework. Faculty teach in an integrative fashion to assist students in making connections between the leadership Block classes, the elementary, middle school and high school administration classes, and the sociological, cultural, philosophical and historical foundations classes. Authentic learning experiences are very much a part of the *Block Program* (a program consisting of three fundamental, six-hour courses that all education administration students take), culminating in cohort projects that focus on real schools and issues and challenges those schools face. *Cohort leaders* are assigned for the Block classes and are practicing urban school administrators who work closely with the Block faculty to provide students a connection between theory and practice.

Cohort Framework

While certification for middle level administration requires 42 credit hours of coursework, the heart of the education administration program and the foundation of all degrees and certification is the 18 hour Block program composed of three six-hour courses in which students stay together consecutively for three semesters. The class is divided into three or four cohort groups who work together for the three semesters as a mini-group within the larger class. Practicing school administrators (cohort leaders) work with their group of students throughout the program as they prepare a performance-based culminating project at the end of every Block. Students meet once a week in a formal classroom setting and then meet approximately 30 hours outside of class with their cohort group to plan their presentation. The cohort leader meets with his or her cohort group during some of these planning meetings and acts as an observer and facilitator to promote effective group behavior. According to a Block I student:

> I will be very honest about what stood out most to me last Monday. It was definitely my cohort group meeting after class. I have been so wrapped up in trying to figure out exactly what we need to do to start working on this group project that I missed the big picture (again). However, my cohort members realized it. I am definitely the kind of person that needs timelines, deadlines, and a planned out path to my goal. After class I met with my group and started talking about what we needed to do, and my frustrations with not knowing. They decided to go to a local hamburger place after class to meet. I will be completely honest. I thought this was a huge waste of time. I just wanted to stay at UMKC and get busy working on what needed to be done. They wanted to work on fellowship and norms. I went along with the group and really enjoyed myself. I forgot about the work for a moment and really

> learned more about the people in my group. My preconceived thoughts about each group member have disappeared and now that I have learned more about their true personalities, I truly believe it will be a lot easier to discuss the "undiscussables" as a result of that meeting. One of you mentioned last week the importance of building relationships. One of my goals will be to focus on building these relationships with my co-workers. I don't want to be in a leadership position where people may think that I am friendly, however not open to hearing about issues they are having. (personal communication, February 17, 2003)

This student is currently a middle school teacher whom we believe will be a better middle school leader because she has learned the value of relationships.

Curriculum Framework

Transformational/constructivist leaders. Leaders must be willing and able to ask new questions and create new stories and discourse around change. They must also be able to create organizations that are driven by an understanding of learning and a belief that all persons, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or gender have the ability to achieve at high levels. This cultural shift should guide how those in the school feel about their own professional development as well as the intellectual development of their students. A different type of leader is needed to facilitate new conversations and to change the stories from hopelessness to possibility.

In order to understand the significance of developing leaders who have the capacity to reculture schools, one must understand the dual task of *culturalism* as it applies to schools. According to Bruner (1996), "on the 'macro' side, [culturalism] looks at the culture of a system of values, rights, exchanges, obligations, opportunities, and power" (p. 11). These values are not shared formally or in writing, but exist throughout the organization in the form of stories, myths, legends, and metaphors. Bruner continues by stating:

> On the 'micro' side, culturalism examines how the demands of a cultural system affect those who must operate within it. In that latter spirit, it concentrates on how individual human beings construct "realities" and meanings that adapt them to the system, at what personal cost, with what expected outcomes. (p. 11)

Students in Block I of the program examine in detail the culture of a school. They look at all data related to student and staff population, as well as artifacts and documents such as newsletters, yearbooks, faculty meeting minutes, staff development plans, curriculum guides, and student work. They also conduct interviews and surveys around the issue of student culture, asking questions that help reveal the impact of school culture on student learning. This initial study becomes a part of their cohort presentation.

Beliefs, assumptions, and values for a new kind of leader. In addition to focusing on the sociological, historical, and cultural foundations of education, the program is based on the premise that leaders must have an understanding of systemic reform and systems thinking, and most importantly, future leaders must understand their own beliefs, assumptions and values related to leading and learning. The use of a systems thinking game simulation facilitates student learning in the area of group decision making in planning a professional development process that will help teachers and administrators in turning their school and district into a learning organization. Students in this program must confront their own mental models as they relate to the sorting and screening of students based on race/ethnicity, gender, and class. Further, leaders must truly know themselves. Constructivism begins with the individual, and can be considered "inside-out" learning.

Changing individual attitudes is not easy, and it often is met with resistance. Fosnot (1992) calls this learning from others "coming to know" (cited in Lambert et al., 1995). "Coming to know" is shaped by social interactions and mediation with others. Because meaning is social in nature, it is evolving, and in motion. Diversity provides complexity, depth, and multiple perspectives to relationships, thereby extending human and societal possibilities. The use of storytelling within the Block is a major strategy for addressing the undiscussables—race/ethnicity, class, and gender. Through the sharing of their stories with others, the participants come to know themselves and the beliefs and assumptions their stories reflect and, consequently, expand their understanding of race/ethnicity, class, and gender.

Establishing fundamentally different schools means different ways of seeing and knowing, making the experience of previously excluded groups more visible and inclusive. Storytelling, in the context of our work, makes use of a deconstruction process that exposes a concept as ideologically or culturally constructed. The power of the strategy is magnified when it is combined with inquiry and dialogue with others around the often undiscussed issues of race, class, and gender. Storytelling has been used to help teachers think more deeply about the meaning of teaching, learn about teacher socialization, transform teacher-educator's research and practice, and promote school reform (Clandinin, 1993; Hollingworth, 1994; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; McWilliam, 1994; Wallace, 1996). With this in mind, the ULAPSE program relies on storytelling methodology in the preparation of administrators.

The ULAPSE Block program is built on the conceptual framework of creating learning communities within the three semesters that can serve as a model for how our students will engage their own staffs when they become leaders. If reflection, sharing, and inquiry have not been a part of a student's experiences in a school organization and if the student has not experienced a sense of community in the workplace, the principal preparation program must create a learning organization where these processes are an integral part of the student's experiences.

According to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996), the standards (for school leaders) are built around the premise that good leaders are those who can improve teaching and learning. The sheer abundance of such activity reflects a widespread—and growing—recognition that without strong leaders at the helm, larger efforts to improve student achievement will likely falter, if not fail entirely. Further, the standards for school leaders from ISLLC identify the skills, knowledge and dispositions that ULAPSE uses to evaluate student performance.

Leaders who improve student learning. Each ISLLC standard for school leaders is designed to reinforce connections to student learning. There is a belief among many education policy observers that the university-based programs that traditionally have prepared administrators have not responded adequately to such demands. In *Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Principalship* (2000), the following questions are posed to the higher education community:

> How can higher education institutions be jolted out of the inertia that has resulted in the mediocre preparation and low entry standards of so many training programs for principals? The partnerships that exist usually are between districts and higher education programs to produce school managers, not instructional leaders, visionary and community leaders. How can shifts in principal training be made? (Institute for Educational Leadership Task Force on the Principalship, p. 17)

Indeed, many educators have never been given an opportunity to challenge their own assumptions about how children learn through reflection and dialogue. A transformational/constructivist principal preparation program must provide opportunities for pre-service administrators to examine their beliefs about student, adult, and organization learning and hold them up for close scrutiny against current research and theories of learning. Providing a safe venue for educators, especially aspiring administrators, to expand and change their mental models about leadership and learning is crucial to the success of a transformational/constructivist approach to leadership training. Student learning is emphasized in every course in the UMKC principal preparation program.

BRINGING THEORY AND PRACTICE TOGETHER

Learning how to work successfully with others is an important part of the Block. It is expected that the cohort groups will move through the stages of team development, and conflicts among group members are expected. In fact, if groups do not experience conflict sometime during the three Blocks it is assumed that they are not growing and maturing. Having this kind of authentic experience in the cohort group—a safe place to experience group dissonance and resolution—allows for lessons to be learned that can later be applied in the day-to-day operations of a school. The program incorporates the use of an interpersonal skills model for helping leaders respond in ways that promote learning for all. The focus is on leaders providing empathetic and authentic responses that address both affective and cognitive domains: "You must be excited about the progress Pam made in math this year. Have you thought about what you did and how you can use these strategies to help other students?"

Course Work

The first semester Block course is *Foundations of School Leadership and Organization*. The purpose of the first Block is to begin the development and path as a transformational/constructivist urban school leader. The instructors believe that students must have the opportunity to examine their own beliefs, assumptions, and core values that will influence and inform their practice as an administrator. Issues related to race/ethnicity, class, and gender are deconstructed so that students can begin to realize their own mental models and how they shape behavior. Determining initial beliefs is the first step of the journey and helps establish a sense of direction as an aspiring administrator. The group discussions around case studies, videos, articles, values clarification activities, and lived experiences help class members in determining where they stand on issues of race/ethnicity, class, and gender as they influence student learning. Leadership assessment instruments such as *Management by Strengths* (1982) are given so that students can get a basic understanding of where their individual leadership strengths lie. In addition to this initial examination of beliefs, students use the journal process to express ideas, reflect on course discussion, relate course work to their outside lives, and to construct meaning. Weekly journaling is an integral part of the Block experience. Adult learners use writing to construct personal meaning for issues being discussed in class and in their cohort groups. These journals become a part of the students' leadership portfolio—giving them a chance to chart their growth within the Block program and their own lives.

The purpose of Block II, *Building Administration and Management,* is to assist students in: (1) developing competencies in administrative and management work, including school finances, budgeting, support personnel selection, food service, purchasing, transportation, and policy and governance; (2) understanding systems thinking and systems change; (3) exploring the concept of learning organizations and the role school culture plays in educational change; and (4) developing abilities in organization development through school improvement planning and site-based management. Topics for examination include organizational ability, building and plant management, problem solving, decision-making, personal management, and collaborative structures. Students also explore ideas related to teacher evaluation, student activity supervision, special programs, and other alternative programs in urban schools. Mentoring programs with their current building administrators help students connect the theory being studied in class with real life school situations. Case studies and group problem solving help students in applying their new knowledge.

There is continued development of the student's ability to understand school cultures and continued study and understanding of organizational cultural change as it applies to school cultures, particularly those in urban settings. Pre-service middle school administrators conduct a field investigation in a middle school. Both qualitative and quantitative data must be gathered and analyzed. School data must be disaggregated so that a comprehensive analysis of each school culture can be shared through a class presentation. The textbooks for Block II focus on systems thinking and systems change as well as the duties and responsibilities inherent in the principalship. Thus, the works of Fullan (1997) and Evans (1996) are examined, as are numerous journal articles, essays, and case studies relevant to current issues in leadership.

Block III, *Student, Staff, and Organizational Development*, develops participants' understanding and knowledge of concepts and theories of developmental learning as they apply to learning by students, learning by adults, and learning within an organization. The ultimate emphasis is on professional development and how to create individual and organizational professional development plans that are meaningful. Participants continue their study of transformational/constructivist leadership. They develop a deeper understanding of how to plan and establish a learning organization culture and how to begin to create such organizational settings. Learning organizations are advanced modern organizational systems that are transformative in nature, and require moral, spiritual, ethical, and courageous leaders. The Block instructors' purpose is to create a learning organization for the participants where everyone strives to discover their personal path to transformational/constructivist leadership.

In Block III, the cohort will continue to study the school site that they investigated in Block II and continue to analyze that school's culture. Class members continue to expand facilitative skills and decision-making skills that enhance and promote learning and engagement for both adults and students. Quantitative data are further analyzed with the expectations that more critical and in-depth analysis and synthesis of the data will occur. Additionally, qualitative data will be gathered, using observation, story collection, interviews and collection of artifacts that are relevant. Once this information is collected, the cohort will develop a three-year professional development plan for transforming the school into a learning organization.

In addition to the cohort project, students study the works of Apple (1996), Apple and Beane (1995), Sparks and Hirsh (1997), and Lambert et al. (1995), and again, current journal articles, essays, and case studies related to systems thinking and organizational development are assigned. Students also write a paper that requires them to reflect on what they would do as a principal candidate who was asked, as part of the selection process, to submit a formal response that addresses the following question:

> You have been selected to become a principal of an urban school in our district. The population is 60% African American, 10% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 25% Caucasian, and 2% Other. There are 60% of the students on free or reduced-priced lunch. During the past five years, the attendance rate has declined, achievement has declined, discipline referrals to the office have increased, suspensions and expulsions have increased and grievances against building administrators by faculty members have increased. There have been three principals in the last eight years. The average teaching experience of the staff is 18 years. The staff is 35% African American and only 10% of these teachers have more than five years experience. There are 25% of the faculty that have been teaching in the building more than twenty years. The conversations of teachers are stories about how good the school used to be.
>
> Problem: What will you do to develop this school into a learning organization?
>
> Explain what you believe such an organization will look like and your leadership approach to accomplish the development of a collaborative school culture. Choose either an elementary school with a population of 475 students and a student/teacher ratio of 22 to 1; a middle school with 800 students and a student/teacher ratio of 24 to 1; or a high school with a population of 1, 275 students and a student/teacher ratio of 21 to 1.

The faculty in the Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education division at UMKC believe that the best leadership programs reflect integrated learning formats, collaborative problem solving, and teamwork. Further, the program strives to promote understanding and responsiveness to organizational change, with a focus on the cultural aspects of education, as well as a focus on learning and achievement. Finally, the program seeks to create transformational/constructivist leaders who can serve all students.

We know that change requires persistence on the part of our graduates. One student wrote in her journal after a panel discussion led by former graduates of the program who are now practicing administrators:

> Today's class was very informative. It was nice to hear positive individuals speaking about the successes in their schools. It's nice to see that these new administrators are enjoying their jobs. It is good to know that what we are learning in the Block classes is applicable to real life situations. So much of my educational history before this program has been filled with classes without much applicable material. But I also realize that you can be a student, go through the motions, get your "A" and your diploma and still fall into old habits. One of the administrators on the panel during our last class expressed the difficulties he had in staying true to those things learned in the Block. I appreciated his honesty in acknowledging that it was difficult not to let others determine the kind of administrator he would become. Those of us who will make it, and will practice these beliefs and processes, will slowly become the transformational/constructivist leaders that we aspire to be. (personal communication, September 15, 2002)

Middle School Administration Preparation: Value Added

In *Turning Points 2000*, Jackson and Davis (2000) assert that "no single individual is more important to initiating and sustaining improvement in middle grades school students' performance than the school principal" (p. 157). They further state that, "one of the most consistent findings in educational research is that high-achieving schools have strong, competent leaders" (p. 156). With these ideas in mind, the ULAPSE program believes that the principal is at the heart of every middle school. Indeed, his or her knowledge, insight, commitment, and leadership will determine to a great extent how well equipped the school community is to address its challenges and how poised it is to seize its opportunities (Petzko et al., 2002).

Building on the leadership Block program, the sociological, cultural, historical and philosophical foundation courses, the school supervision course and the practicum at a middle school which are all required as part of the Masters of Arts program in ULAPSE, students who desire certification in middle school administration and an Educational Specialist degree with an emphasis in middle level education must complete the *Middle School Administration* course. This three-hour course is taught by a professor who has been a middle school teacher, middle school principal, and middle school director. This instructor is also the Chair of the Urban Issues Task Force for the National Middle School Association and a member of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. The conceptual framework of ULAPSE forms the basis of the course in addition to specific middle level theory and practice.

The purpose of the *Middle School Administration* course is to explore the role of the middle school principal and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to reculture middle schools, especially urban middle schools, with their unique challenges and rewards. The course also focuses on the research and best practice related to young adolescent development, organizational structures for high-performing middle schools, the middle school curriculum continuum, pedagogy and exemplary practices for young adolescent learners, assessment and evaluation as tools for student success, and advocacy for middle grades reform with district administration, boards of education, parents and community members. *Adolescent Development* is taught by faculty in the Education, Psychology, Counseling, and Research division, and students explore the developmental characteristics and needs of the early adolescent.

Using *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), the National Middle School's *This We Believe* (1982, revised 1995), the work of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, and other relevant and timely articles from middle level publications, students are well-versed in the latest middle level research, theory, and best practice as they relate to the middle school principalship. The students continue to address issues related to race/ethnicity, class, and gender in order to create high-performing middle schools that are developmentally appropriate, academically challenging, and socially equitable. It is important that middle school leaders create fair and equitable schools that value culture, language, and racial identity. Further, they must view diversity as an asset for students, staff, and community.

Case studies, simulations, and action research in a middle school that relates to a leadership issue are some of the strategies used to support a constructivist learning environment. Students use the "Schools to Watch" criteria from the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform (2002) and ISLLC standards to assess a middle school's culture and operating principles to ascertain the level of implementation of middle level practices and programs. Students shadow a middle school principal and interview middle school principals, teachers, students, and parents to understand the needs of different middle school constituents and continue to refine their administrative platform that reflects the core values and beliefs that will guide their practice when they become a middle school administrator.

Leadership matters in the creation of high-performing middle schools that reflect the needs of young adolescents. The education of young adolescents, especially those who are poor and minority, is crucial for the preservation of a democratic way of life and the well being of our society as a whole. Supporting the advancement of minority teachers to become leaders in urban schools increases the opportunity for students to see people like themselves in leadership positions. According to Henze, Katz, Norte, Sather, and Walker (2002):

> There is a definite advantage to thinking about leadership in this broad-based way when it comes to making schools more inclusive of diversity. By making room in leadership for more people with different talents and interests, greater possibilities open up for people of color, and others whose voices have been relatively silent in school leadership, to step into the foreground. (pp. 1–2)

The Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education program at the University of Missouri, Kansas City is committed to developing school leaders who can positively address the many critical concerns of children and families in the community.

The Practicum: Real Life Application of Theory

One of the most powerful components in the preparation of middle school leaders is the semester long practicum. Students must accumulate 120 hours of leadership work at a school site and adhere to ISLLC standards (Chief State School Officers, 1996). They must work with their mentor to develop an action research project focused on school leadership. Middle school administration candidates have conducted research on topics such as improving school culture; maximizing the potential of interdisciplinary teaming; increasing active, engaged learning through principal support; middle school looping; increasing parental involvement; and recruitment of quality teachers in middle schools. The students have reported that these action research projects have resulted in actual substantive change in their middle schools.

One middle school administration candidate stated in his exit interview from the practicum that he had learned to continue to critique and analyze constructivist methodology as a leadership process due to the constant "crisis" mode that he has experienced in urban school settings. He went on to explain that the constructivist philosophy and practice involved a lot of time, which unfortunately, is often strained—particularly in urban settings. He stated that his charge will be to develop creative ways to institutionalize and sustain the kinds of dialogue processes necessary to improve teaching and learning in schools.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ULAPSE PROGRAM

Every year, graduates from UMKC's Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education Division in the School of Education become new school administrators. As new administrators, our graduates often find themselves in large, impersonal, bureaucratic systems without access to mentors who can help them through their first administrative experience.

Through the use of virtual team coaching, ULAPSE has made a commitment to provide a learning community for these graduates so that they may continue to learn and grow. Virtual teams are groups of people working interdependently with a common purpose across space, time, and organizational boundaries through the use of technology. Virtual teams composed of past graduates are coached by division faculty members through the use of e-mail, chat rooms, and discussion boards, plus some face-to-face meetings. The overall goal of this program is to use virtual teams to assist in the continued development and support of new school administrators. It is hoped that virtual teams will provide the support and continued personal growth needed for graduates to remain true to their core values and beliefs about leadership, student learning, and schooling. The coaches are using ISLLC standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) as one framework for this professional development experience. The activities undertaken in the program support the research beliefs that school leaders must be life-long learners, must be proactive concerning their own professional development, and recognize that professional development is integral to changing the culture of schools. Through the use of virtual teams, ULAPSE proposes to move toward a campus without borders by creating learning communities where our alumnae will be supported and encouraged. We have taken the perspective that most people in school talk about the need for fundamental change in the culture of schooling and assume it may happen. Using a constructivist framework in which participants use reflection, dialogue, journaling, and storytelling to formulate a personal vision about their role in reculturing schools, our goal is to develop graduates who have the hearts and minds that will make it happen. Middle schools, especially in urban settings, need leaders who value and honor diversity and believe that all children can learn. They need leaders who understand the importance of using research and best practice in designing middle school programs that best meet the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs and characteristics of young adolescents. We believe our program is helping create just this kind of leader.

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APPENDIX

Requirements for Middle Level Certification: The ULAPSE Program

Required Course	*Credit Hours*
Block I: Foundations of School Leadership and Organization	6
Block II: Building Administration and Management	6
Block III: Student, Staff, and Organizational Development	6
Middle School Administration	3
Adolescent Development	3
Curriculum Design	3
Governmental Aspects of Education	3
Historical, Cultural, or Philosophical Foundations of Education	3
Principles and Methods of Research	3
School Supervision	3
Administrative Practicum	3
Total Credit Hours	42

CHAPTER 16

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

School Culture, Theory, and Practice

Mark T. Miles
Park Hill School District, Kansas City, Missouri

ABSTRACT

Within the rapidly changing political, economic, and social context of American education, successful principals possess the ability to analyze and support various elements of school culture. This chapter describes a first-year principal's analysis and support of elements of school culture: collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and the learning partnership among students, teachers, and parents. The author summarizes school culture theory and the organization of his principal preparation program. The author compares the collaborative nature of the principal preparation program and his ability to maneuver through the cultural landscape of the real world of the middle school principal. After providing a description of the various middle school practices utilized to enhance these elements of school culture, the author recommends continued dialogue among theoreticians and practitioners to

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enhance the ability of principals to decipher the various symbolic elements of the educational organization.

INTRODUCTION

Today's principal is situated in a role that grows increasingly complex as the nature of society, the economy, and schools as organizations continue to change. An analysis of Beck and Murphy's (1993) decade-by-decade review of the principalship reveals an evolution throughout the twentieth century in response to the rapidly changing environmental context. A focus on promoting spiritual values and the principles of scientific management dominated principals' duties in the 1920s and 1930s. With the advent of World War II, principals were expected to provide democratic leadership by involving many stakeholders in decision-making processes and to enable students and teachers to engage in a productive way of life. The administrative theory movement during the 1950s motivated principals to maintain a sense of stability during the social and political unrest of the 1960s. In light of the increased involvement of the federal government and the growing number of special interest groups during the 1970s, a focus on a human resource model emphasizing positive interpersonal relationships and community alliances began to shape the principalship. As a result of effective schools research, the 1980s witnessed a renewed emphasis by the principal on classroom instruction and instructional leadership. The twentieth century ended with the emerging expectation of principals as transformational leaders and a focus on organizational development. This evolution of principal leadership models reflects various attempts by principals, teachers, and researchers to deal with their constantly changing environment.

A significant aspect of the complexity of the principal's role in today's school setting is that individual's ability to provide leadership for the development of a collaborative school culture. Literature on school improvement suggests that progress depends upon cultural elements and social processes (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Morgan, 1997; Norris, 1994; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sarason, 1966; Schein, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1994). To improve schools as learning organizations, organizational members must alter their patterns of behavior, use patience and tolerance, increase their capacity for growth, and emphasize communication and group process skills (Bredeson, 1993). To lead authentic and long-lasting change for the school, exemplary principals elicit the school's values, beliefs, and mission, develop best practice knowledge and commitment, shape a collaborative vision and goals for the school, collect, analyze and interpret a wide variety of school data, develop plans to accomplish school goals, and enable and monitor the school's action plans (Lucas & Valentine, 2001).

Indeed, principals find themselves uniquely situated in a political, economic, and social context. During the past few decades, political, economic, and social issues have had a profound impact upon educational policies. For example, during the 1940s and 1950s, the Great Depression, the Cold War, and the Brown v. Board of Education decision significantly impacted educational policies. Educational progress in the 1960s and 1970s was defined in relation to the civil rights movement, desegregation, and affirmative action. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) signified the federal government's commitment to equity. The ESEA provided funding for programs, instructional materials, and educational research designed to improve education for the disadvantaged. The Coleman Report also emerged from the federal emphasis on educational research.

Prior to the 1980s, the liberal economic view of education prevailed holding that increasing the educational attainment and achievement of students from all backgrounds would allow those students to secure more productive employment, advance socially, and positively impact the economy; however, during the 1980s, conservative views of education asserted that students were not securing productive employment because of poor education. Students were viewed as uneducated and undisciplined. Conservatives blamed educators, students, families, and lax governmental policies for the plight of these students.

During the 1980s, economic policies established at the national level affected many educational policy issues at the national, state, and local levels of government (House, 1991). The Reagan Revolution resulted in reduced taxes and increased spending on the military. As a result, the federal government provided little new money for education. While Reagan promised funding for school reform efforts, funding for education at the federal level actually decreased between fiscal years 1980 and 1989 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1990). The reforms that did follow cost little, focused upon increased student discipline, and upheld the interests of the middle and upper classes (House, 1991).

The democratization of information, technology, and finance (Friedman, 2000) has created an international debate over school effectiveness. In 1983, authors of *A Nation at Risk* linked effective schooling with economic productivity. This report asserted that academic standards in the United States remained low, schools were ineffective, and as a result, students in the United States lagged behind students in other countries. Following these assertions, business leaders became involved by lobbying local, state, and national policymakers for school improvement (Reyes, Wagstaff, & Fasarelli, 1999).

The repeated criticisms of education throughout the past several years have brought about school reform efforts intended to improve public schools and the education of all students. Funding for public education, rapidly changing demographics, and providing students with the knowledge and skills for a constantly changing work environment remain challenges for the future. Increasing the time for the development of quality interpersonal relationships between students and adult school personnel may promote a "culture of care" within the school environment while recognizing the needs of students (Reyes et al., 1999).

School Culture Theory

During the past two decades, studies of schools as organizations with unique cultures have increased dramatically. As researchers have attempted to uncover the characteristics of effective schools, the concept of school culture has become a significant topic. In some studies of effective elementary schools, school culture emerged as a persuasive explanation for their success (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Cohen 1983; Hawley, Rosenholtz, Goodstein, & Hasselbring, 1984; MacKenzie, 1983; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Culture was also an influential variable in schools considered to be more satisfying by teachers and students (Goodlad, 1984). Middle schools judged as contributing to positive adolescent development were described as having distinct cultures or "personalities" (Lipsitz, 1984). The "goodness" ascribed to exemplary high schools by Lightfoot (1983) referred to the school's overall culture rather than to other elements within the school. Ultimately, school culture can become the cohesion that bonds the school together as it goes about its mission.

The importance of school culture and the role that principals play in shaping cultural patterns and practices remains a key ingredient in promoting student achievement and furthering school reform. Within the changing contexts of American education, successful schools possess leaders who can read, assess, and reinforce core rituals, traditions, and values (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Principals, as the formal leaders of schools, must look for ways to shape the culture for "culture is the social energy that drives—or fails to drive—the organization" (Kilmann, Saxton, & Serpa, 1986, p. 92). While many definitions of organizational and school culture are proposed by various authors, a widely recognized definition is "a pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems . . . that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1992). Others refer to school culture as "the guiding beliefs and expectations evident in the way a school operates, particularly in reference to how people relate (or fail to relate) to each other" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 37).

Several studies illustrate the importance of a collaborative school culture for improving student achievement and motivating teachers. Fyans and Maehr (1990) examined the effects of five dimensions of school culture on student achievement: academic challenges, comparative achievement, recognition for achievement, school community, and perception of school goals. The authors found students more motivated to learn in schools with collaborative school cultures. Thacker and McInerney (1992) also analyzed the effects of school culture on student achievement in elementary schools. The project focused on creating a new mission statement, goals based on outcomes for students, curriculum alignment corresponding with those goals, staff development, and building level decision-making. In this study, the number of students who failed an annual statewide test dropped as much as ten percent when schools were involved with these initiatives. Cheng (1993) also found that school culture correlated with teachers' attitudes toward their work. In a study that profiled effective and ineffective organizational cultures, Cheng found stronger school cultures had teachers with higher degrees of motivation.

Some theorists advocate cultural leadership and suggest that the principal's focus should be to promote a positive school culture (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993). Successful leaders focus upon the development of a positive and healthy school culture because a negative and weak school culture works against any school reform initiatives. The positive and healthy school culture promotes educational excellence and school effectiveness. A shared, collaborative culture supports excellence in the teaching profession. While a focus by leaders on structure and process are required to maintain the organization, a focus on promoting a healthy school culture can enable the school and its members to work toward greater visions. Schein affirms the necessity for the focus of the principal on school culture by asserting, "... one could argue that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture" (Schein, 1992, p. 5).

In the 1980s, the educational literature called for principals to become the primary source of knowledge for developing the school's instructional program and to focus faculty attention on student outcomes. As a result, the principal was expected to be knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction, to intervene directly with teachers in making instructional improvements, to provide high expectations for teachers and students, to supervise classroom instruction, to coordinate the school's curriculum, and to closely monitor student progress (Hallinger, 1992). Some critics assert that the conception of the principal as instructional leader is outdated and ill suited to maintaining long-term school improvement initiatives (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992).

In the 1990s, school reform theorists began to recommend the decentralization of authority over curricular and instructional decisions, expanded roles for teachers and parents in the decision-making process, and an increased emphasis on complex instruction and active learning. Teachers and parents came to be seen as important sources of expertise in the decision-making process. As a result, the basis for school leadership expanded to include teachers and parents as well as the principal. This complex decision-making process led Leithwood and his colleagues to emphasize the role of the transformational leader. Transformational leadership practices foster significant growth in the overt practices of those experiencing such leadership, their developmental capacities, and motivation to succeed (Leithwood, 1993).

Humans have an innate desire for those essential ingredients that provide direction, purpose, and meaning to collective activity. Effective leaders recognize the significance of symbols while articulating a vision that provides meaning to organizational members. In many ways, leadership is a symbolic endeavor (Bolman & Deal, 1994). Leaders must create, shape, and support the school culture to promote the pursuit of educational excellence throughout the school. Whereas organizational structures and processes maintain the status quo, a healthy school culture fosters school success and improvement by accessing the spirit of organizational members and providing meaning to their daily work within the school (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993).

A collaborative school culture may impact the school in many ways. A collaborative school culture fosters school effectiveness and productivity. in addition, collegial and collaborative activities that foster better communication and problem-solving activities develop. This culture, in turn, promotes successful change and improvement efforts. In a school with a collaborative culture, faculty, staff, students, and administrators commit to and identify with the school and its goals. As the culture increases the energy and motivation of faculty, staff, students, administrators, and community, these stakeholders increasingly focus upon what is important and valued (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Cunningham and Gresso (1993) offer similar suggestions for enhancing school improvement efforts through school culture. School culture may be enhanced by providing all organizational members with the opportunity to communicate about organizational issues on a regular basis. Quality information is provided to all organizational members to promote quality decision-making. The development of a collective vision allows for collective action toward a common goal. Collegiality and collaboration foster cohesion between organizational members and develop common understandings. Trust and support among faculty, staff, and administration is prevalent. When conflict emerges between individuals or groups, a spirit of compromise emerges. Individual empowerment and lifelong growth are promoted within the school. These processes contribute to sustained inquiry and continuous school improvement efforts.

School improvement occurs when teachers strengthen their teaching skills, the curriculum is renovated, the organization improves, and parents and citizens are involved in a partnership with the school (Saphier & King, 1985). The school culture may enhance these efforts or undermine them. According to Saphier and King, the twelve norms of school culture that affect school improvement are: (a) collegiality; (b) experimentation; (c) high expectations; (d) trust and confidence; (e) tangible support; (f) reaching out to the knowledge bases; (g) appreciation and recognition; (h) caring, celebration, and humor; (i) involvement in decision making; (j) protection of what's important; (k) traditions; and (l) honest, open communication. Leadership plays a role in the development of these norms. Without quality leadership, school culture will not develop nor endure over time. Whenever these norms are present within a school, principals, teachers, students, and other stakeholders reflect them in the discussion of values and in their behavior.

Within the context of constant pressures for school reform, Deal and Peterson (1991) link successful school reform to a productive school culture and the principal as a symbolic leader. The cultural approach to principal leadership is intimately connected to the human resource approach with a focus on individual skills and needs, the structural approach with a focus on goals and coordination, the political approach with a focus on power, conflict, and interest groups within the organization, and the free market economic approach with a focus upon competition between schools for student enrollment. The cultural approach focuses upon behavioral patterns and the norms, values, and beliefs that sustain these patterns over time.

School culture refers to "the character of a school as it reflects deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of its history" (Deal & Peterson, 1991, p. 7). A productive school culture may improve school productivity. Several studies suggest that an organization that possesses a strong identity, adapts to the changing environment, and responds to the needs of its members will be more productive (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Ouchi, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Successful schools share similar cultural characteristics. Successful schools have organizational members that share strong values promoting safety and the primacy of learning, establish high expectations for students and teachers, believe in the importance of basic skills instruction, develop performance standards and feedback procedures, and value strong leadership (Deal & Peterson, 1991).

Principals, as the shapers of school culture, must continually seek to refine the symbols and symbolic activity that provide meaning to organizational members. Principals must analyze the existing school culture and utilize the history of the school to provide a transition to the future. Once the principal has analyzed the school culture, he/she may begin to shape the culture by serving as a symbol, potter, poet, actor, and healer. As a symbol, the principal affirms the values of the organization through behavior and attention to certain issues. As a potter, the principal interacts with the school's heroes, rituals, ceremonies, and symbols. As a poet, the principal reinforces the school's values by using certain language to promote an ideal image. As an actor, the principal plays a role in the daily drama of school. As a healer, the principal provides stability in the presence of various transitions and the ever-changing school environment (Deal & Peterson, 1991).

Maehr and Midgley (1996) contend that two reasons exist for examining school culture. First, school culture makes a difference in the motivation and learning of students. When students sense and understand the mission of the school and recognize the salient elements of a collaborative school culture, student motivation and learning increases. Second, school culture is a manageable variable. By managing the culture, the principal may enhance the investment teachers and students make in their educational endeavors.

The leader's principles, values, and beliefs and how they are communicated to organizational members are extremely important. As the chief enculturation agent, the principal is the individual ultimately responsible for school culture and must establish the link between mission and practice, focus on solutions, be creative, acknowledge the needs of others, promote staff development, create learning networks, and focus on student achievement as the primary goal of schooling (Krajewski, 1996). Cultural leadership on the part of the principal requires the principal to stir human consciousness, interpret meanings, articulate key cultural strands, and link organizational members to them (Sergiovanni, 1984). The principal's long-range vision is also a key factor in the building of culture (Sashkin & Sashkin, 1993).

PREPARING FOR THAT STRANGE LAND

In what ways do principal preparation programs enhance the knowledge and skills of aspiring principals related to the development of collaborative school cultures? Most programs for training school administrators range in quality from embarrassing to disastrous (Griffiths, 1988). As society continues to evolve, the preparation of school leaders should also evolve. Various authors have identified numerous deficiencies of traditional principal preparation programs:

> Students are inundated with theory but have little opportunity to apply those theories to professional problems and challenges (Lumsden, 1992).
>
> Students are unprepared for the hectic pace and varied content of principals' work (Anderson, 1991).
>
> Strengthening aspiring principals' conflict resolution skills, improving face-to-face communication skills, and educating trainees about the emotional demands of the principalship are not priorities (Anderson).
>
> Helping trainees assess and respond effectively to "human situations" is often overlooked (Schmuck, 1993).
>
> While a substantial body of knowledge continues to support the significance of formal leadership as a critical ingredient in the process of effective schooling (Cotton, 1995), the roles and competencies of school leaders are clearly evolving and call for a simultaneous evolution in the image of leader preparation (Murphy, 1993).

Within the past decade, the advanced principal preparation program at the University of Missouri-Columbia was redesigned in an effort to bring the program in line with knowledge of best practices utilizing a cohort system. The program is centered on the four main themes of Pedagogical Leadership, Organizational Environment, Organizational Development, and Moral Leadership and twelve skill dimensions. While the twelve dimensions guide the program, a matrix was developed to ensure that these dimensions and their associated indicators correlated with the six Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. These six common standards and their indicators for school leaders are intended to stimulate vigorous dialogue about quality educational leadership among stakeholders in school administration and to provide raw material that will help stakeholders across the education landscape enhance the quality of educational leadership throughout the nation's schools (Shipman & Murphy, 1996). The six ISLLC Standards are (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996):

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

- facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- ensuring the management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

A noted part of the redesigned principal preparation program at the University of Missouri-Columbia is the utilization of a cohort system. Cognitive learning theory suggests that learning is a profoundly social process that depends on dialogue, language, and group processing (Vygotsky, 1978). The cohort format also enhances student self-esteem, provides peer support, and furnishes networking opportunities (Basom, Yerkes, Norris, & Barnett, 1995; Wesson, Holman, & Holman, 1996). Because the cohort remains together for a two-year period, the cohort can be viewed as a laboratory for researching, learning, and practicing the collaborative, interactive, and social nature of transformational leadership (Murray, 1998).

The program consists of four semesters of intensive coursework followed by an internship spanning two semesters. During the initial summer semester, students enroll in Site Leadership, Leadership for Collaborative Cultures, and School Leadership and attend class from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, for a four-week period. The schedule for the fall and winter classes requires students to attend class one Friday and Saturday per month. Students meet from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Friday followed by a class session from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on the following Saturday. The fall and winter semesters consist of six hours each and include: Organizational Leadership, Supervision of Learning Environments, Effective Schools, and Curriculum Leadership. The final nine-hour summer coursework consists of Action Research, Advanced Leadership, and Advanced Learning Environments.

Each student also completes an administrative internship and applies the skills and knowledge gained from enrollment in the program. In addition, students develop an electronic portfolio based upon the twelve dimensions of the program or the six ISLLC standards prior to completion of the advanced principal preparation program. Within the electronic portfolio, students document the knowledge gained and the skills developed during the program. An integral part of the electronic portfolio development is the use of reflection as part of the leadership maturation process.

The extended block of learning time facilitates the utilization of problem-based learning activities. During the two-year program, students engage in two in-depth problem-based learning activities requiring higher order thinking and the use of problem-solving skills. Bridges (1992) suggests many reasons for utilizing problem-based learning:

- Prior knowledge is activated.
- The context in which information is learned resembles the context in which it will later be applied.
- Information is better understood, processed, and recalled if students have an opportunity to elaborate on that information.

Throughout the program, students are engaged in collaborative activities reinforcing the importance of the development of interpersonal relationships among group members. Cohort cohesion is enhanced as members work toward common goals and provide mutual support, a process very similar to the efforts of teachers and administrators within a middle school with a collaborative culture.

School Culture Practice

Organizational stakeholders have witnessed the cultural transformation of Plaza Middle School (Park Hill School District, Kansas City, MO) during the past year. At the beginning of the 2002–2003 academic year, Plaza Middle School converted from a 6–7–8 grade configuration to a middle school that provides educational services for all sixth grade students within the district. The new single-grade configuration allows greater flexibility in scheduling and grouping students for instructional opportunities, provides better opportunities for meeting the needs of special education, gifted, and students who speak English as a second language, allows better distribution of students among the school district facilities, and reflects our community's diversity.

Most sixth grade teachers from the three different middle schools within the district elected to teach at Plaza Middle School where they were arranged into teaching teams of three-four teachers with a learning specialist assigned to each team. Thus, two-thirds of the faculty members were new to the building. With the norms and practices of three different buildings coalescing during our first year together, a new cultural order is developing. Being a first-year principal also added to the complexity of the new cultural order as boundaries were tested and new approaches to educating adolescents were explored. Assessing the cultural landscape of the district and school has been a meaningful task during this first year of a new position and grade configuration.

Gruenert (1998) developed a school culture survey after reviewing school culture literature and administering the survey to 632 teachers in Missouri. Factor analysis revealed six factors of school culture:

1. Collaborative leadership—refers to the ways in which leaders within the school create and foster collaborative relationships with faculty and staff.
2. Teacher collaboration—refers to the degree to which teachers use constructive dialogue to enhance the school's vision.
3. Professional development—describes the degree to which teachers value continuous personal development and school improvement.
4. Unity of purpose—refers to the degree to which teachers strive toward a common mission for the school.
5. Collegial support—describes the degree to which teachers work together effectively.
6. Learning partnership—describes the degree to which teachers, parents, and students work together with students' interests in mind.

To assist our development, faculty members completed the School Culture Survey[1] (Gruenert, 1998) to determine perceptions of the school's culture as described by the six factors described above. The School Culture Survey consists of 35 5-point Likert-scale items where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Higher ratings on the factors of the School Culture Survey indicate stronger agreement with the statement. Factors of the School Culture Survey include collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership. The data were collected in December 2002, followed by faculty dialogue during a faculty meeting in January, 2003. Figure 16.1 summarizes the results of the School Culture Survey for Plaza Middle School. While discussion of agreement and disagreement of statements on the school culture occurred during a faculty meeting, several organizational practices and structures also exist to support these various factors of school culture. Some of the organizational practices and structures remain from successful implementation in the past while other practices and structures are emerging in response to our recent contextual changes.

To facilitate the development of teacher leaders, teachers meet on a monthly basis with other teachers within the building that teach similar

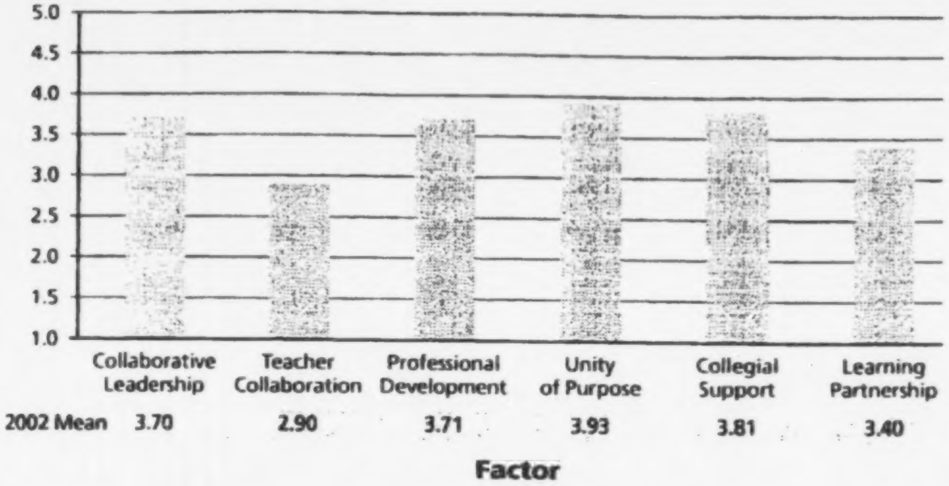

Figure 16.1. School culture survey—Plaza Middle School

content areas. For example, science teachers meet on a monthly basis to discuss curriculum, assessment, and instruction. A cadre facilitator develops an agenda and facilitates dialogue among all cadre members while leading each achievement cadre. Cadre facilitators are also members of the School Leadership Team which also meets on a monthly basis to discuss organizational issues. Plaza also utilizes Ad Hoc committees to support other organizational elements such as technology, safety, volunteers, and student/staff recognition. Other cadre members are Senior Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) leaders and facilitate discussion of standardized testing issues.

To enhance teacher collaboration, teams of teachers are provided with one individual planning period and one team planning period each school day. This year, teachers allotted a significant amount of time during team meetings to discuss the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students. Next year, during one team planning period each month, teams of teachers will be placed in focus groups to read and discuss *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) and the related study guide as well as one team planning period each month designated as a Reading Improvement Day. The factor score for Teacher Collaboration (2.90) appears to be inconsistent with other factor scores. Analysis of survey items and discussion with teachers revealed only rare occurrences of teachers observing each other teaching during the school day. While teachers acknowledge that this observation time would be valuable, other competing demands during individual and team planning time have taken precedence over this one-on-one time for collaboration. To remove this teacher isolation within the classroom, greater emphasis will be placed upon teachers observing other teachers during the next academic year.

Professional development activities provide additional opportunities for collaboration among teachers and administrators. During the Reading Improvement Day each month, teams of teachers will discuss reading improvement strategies and related instructional strategies. Faculty meetings have also been designed as professional development workshops to include school culture, quality teaching and learning, and discussion of the Instructional Practices Inventory[2] (Middle Level Leadership Center, 1998). Administrator meetings with teams on a weekly basis also provide the opportunity to discuss team development, practices, and policies.

With a new grade configuration and many new organizational members in the building, a first step in providing a unity of purpose was a reexamination of our mission statement. Multiple stakeholder input was gathered during the creation of our mission statement. During our collaborative conversations, organizational members began the development of a common language for school improvement. A new mission statement for Plaza Middle School was adopted through faculty consensus in October 2002. As our 2003–2008 Comprehensive School Improvement Plan is finalized, our vision will also be articulated to provide a guide during our quest for continual school improvement. The high factor score for Unity of Purpose on the School Culture Survey may be attributed to the extensive work toward articulation of our mission statement throughout the first half of the academic year.

While sixth grade teachers in other middle schools were familiar with one another prior to this academic year, they did not possess the organizational intimacy evident currently at the sixth grade center. Teachers continue to share ideas and assist one another when needed. The progression of time will allow teachers to continue this process and allow them to become familiar with the strengths of other organizational members. Organizational intimacy will continue to evolve through time and the efforts of organizational members.

One symbol of our learning partnership among students, parents, and teachers is the significant increase in Parent Teacher Association membership for the 2002–2003 academic year. Plaza Middle School received the Early Bird Award from the Missouri Parent Teacher Association for the greatest increase in membership (+183%) from the previous year. Numerous parents volunteer on-site at Plaza Middle School to assist with classroom activities, school spirit days, and other educational activities. Our efforts at the establishment of a learning partnership among students, parents, and teachers will be ongoing. Next year, teachers will be expected to utilize an electronic gradebook and post those grades to the Internet on a bi-weekly basis. As a result, students and parents will be able to assess student academic progress throughout a grading period. Communication through email, telephone, and newsletters will continue to solidify our learning partnership.

CONCLUSION

Making the transition from theory to practice has been a journey of discovery. Faced with a unique context and constant conflict within the educational organization, maintaining a focus upon school culture remains a challenge. The resolution of conflict among various stakeholders further defines the importance of the elements of school culture. In addition, the context in which cultural leadership is exercised plays an important part in school improvement. As a first-year principal, I have been blessed with a knowledgeable and professional staff with a commitment to school improvement and the dedication to provide exceptional service to students, parents, and community members. Exercising cultural leadership in an atmosphere where commitment and dedication were not present would add to the challenge.

My path through the Principal Preparation program at the University of Missouri–Columbia was somewhat unique in that after completing the administrative internship requirement for the Educational Specialist degree, I immediately accepted a graduate assistantship at the Middle Level Leadership Center to continue my graduate work in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Ph. D. program at the University of Missouri-Columbia. My Principal Preparation program included work with middle level education scholars and practitioners at the Middle Level Leadership Center and the National Study of Leadership in Middle Level Schools, a study of 100 highly successful middle schools throughout the United States. My experiences with cohort members during the Educational Specialist degree program and the graduate assistantship at the Middle Level Leadership Center greatly enhanced my knowledge and skills related to the development of a caring, collaborative culture. My dissertation entitled, "The Relative Impact of Principal Instructional and Transformational Leadership on School Culture" also provided an intensive research opportunity to expand my knowledge related to school culture. Thus, the principal preparation program at the University of Missouri-Columbia directly impacted my ability to maneuver through the cultural landscape during the first-year of the principalship

As instructional and transformational leaders, principals must be able to synthesize information efficiently and effectively and possess expert problem-solving skills. Because of the daily problems of practice, problem-based learning should be a primary instructional strategy in principal preparation programs. Ultimately, principal preparation programs should seek to provide students with authentic situations similar to the types of challenges and experiences they will encounter as principals. Students should be involved in activities designed to develop their knowledge and skills as instructional and transformational leaders as well as group problem-solving simulations, collaborative conversations, and thoughtful reflection. Principals of the twenty-first century should be capable of developing a collaborative school culture, fostering the professional development of teachers, and facilitating the cooperative development of school goals while securing the personal commitment of organizational stakeholders to the accomplishment of those goals.

Leaders play a valuable role in shaping school culture. The principal, as a shaper of culture, communicates compelling ideas and the meaning of those ideas for organizational members (Sergiovanni, 1994). Schools with collaborative cultures possess structures and processes that promote collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, a unity of purpose, collegial support among teachers, and a learning partnership among students, parents, and teachers (Gruenert, 1998). Norris (1994) suggests that shaping the school culture requires understanding, patience, and human relations and communication skills on the part of the principal. The nature of cohort programs enhances human relations and communications skills on the part of its members. Certainly, my access to the network of fellow cohort members enhances my attempts to solve the problems of practice. The discussions with fellow cohort members provide insight and comfort in dealing with a host of leadership issues.

The real world of the middle school principal is filled with conflict as competing entities attempt to gain influence and resources. Being a middle school principal will remain a challenging role. Successful middle school principals create a collaborative school culture that enhances the organization's ability to provide a quality education for adolescents at a time of academic, social, emotional, and physical growth. These principals encourage individual teacher growth through professional development and by challenging teachers to expand their learning. The emphasis on school improvement, renewal, and reflection must remain a priority if we are to achieve greatness.

The variety of learning experiences and networking relationships developed with fellow cohort members during coursework and the duties of my research assistantship provided glimpses of that strange land called the principalship. While experience remains the best teacher, the nature of the cohort program allowed me to develop my knowledge and skills related to the development of a collaborative school culture. Those who have the task of redefining principal preparation programs have a momentous task placed before them. Instructors within these principal preparation programs should utilize instructional strategies that model the social learning processes crucial to school improvement efforts and the development of a collaborative school culture. Perhaps through careful reflection and increasing dialogue among theoreticians and practitioners, those entering the principalship may not feel like strangers in a strange land. Instead, new principals entering the profession will be adept at deciphering symbolic elements and maneuvering through the cultural landscape of educational organizations.

NOTES

1. The School Culture Survey consists of 35 5-point Likert-scale items where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Higher ratings on the factors of the School Culture Survey indicate stronger agreement with the statement. Factors of the School Culture Survey include collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnership. A copy of the School Culture Survey may be viewed at http://www.mllc.org/surveys/scs.pdf.
2. The Instructional Practices Inventory provides observational data about the nature of teaching practices across the school. An observer systematically observes classes throughout the school, obtaining more than 100 observations of teaching practice during a typical school day. A profile of the practices is provided for faculty members. The six categories of teaching practices are: active learning/active teaching, teacher-led conversation, teacher-led instruction, student seatwork/teacher engaged, student seatwork/teacher disengaged, and total disengagement. A copy of the Instructional Practices Inventory may be viewed at http://www.mllc.org/surveys/ipi.pdf.

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part III

RESOURCES

CHAPTER 17

EARLY ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY SYLLABUS

T. Chris Riley-Tillman
Temple University

Starting in 1998 Temple University's College of Education offered its undergraduate, elementary and secondary teacher preparation students the opportunity to "add-on" a middle school endorsement. This endorsement consisted of two classroom-based courses including Research-based Practices in Middle Level Education and Middle School Curriculum, and two field-based courses, a practicum and student teaching. Within a year this undergraduate program was extended to graduate students pursuing the masters of education degree or professional development credit. This latter group consisted primarily of teachers from the School District of Philadelphia who held elementary or secondary certifications were assigned to teach in a middle school, and who wanted to know more about the middle grades.

While Temple's College of Education was designing and implementing this endorsement, the state of Pennsylvania continued to debate the pros and cons of specialized licensure for middle level teachers. The state had always followed a policy of allowing those with either elementary or secondary licensure to teach in grades 6–8. Finally, in 2001 the Pennsylvania Department of Education published the guidelines for universities and col-

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leges to follow in the establishment of middle school certification programs. Unfortunately, the middle school license that covers grades 5–9 was not mandated. Elementary and secondary certified teachers would still be allowed to teach at this level.

Shortly after the release of the state guidelines in 2001 faculty in Temple's College of Education turned the "add-on endorsement" into a full-blown certification program. A self-study was conducted, the necessary documents were forwarded to the State Department of Education, and a site visit was conducted by the Department of Education. In the process of the transformation from endorsement to certification program this course, Early Adolescent Developmental Psychology, was designed.

In developing this course two key developmental elements were focused upon. First, middle school students are experiencing a unique biological event, puberty, that has significant impact on their school experience though all aspects of development. Second, the social development of middle school students has equally significant impact on their school experience. In middle school a considerable number of students start to focus more on their peer group than on their family and/or teachers. This transition can be frustrating to parents and teachers, as they tend to lose some control over the children as peers become more powerful.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to a developmental approach to different psychological constructs for early adolescents. Specifically, during the semester a life-span approach will be applied to the issues of physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development and how they impact the unique group of children in the early adolescence stage of life. Furthermore, the educational implications will be highlighted. While the course focuses on early adolescence, the implications of childhood development and the impact of development during early adolescence on later life will be discussed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings

Astor-Stetson, E., & Meehan, A. M. (2001). *Annual editions: Adolescent psychology 01/02.* (3rd ed.). Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill.

Sprinthall, N. A., & Collins, W. A. (1995). *Adolescent psychology: A developmental view* (3rd ed.). Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill.

Reading assignments from this and other sources will be assigned as relevant to the weekly topic. An updated reading list will be presented in class and on the class homepage. Readings should be completed before the class in which the topic is discussed. Simply put, you will get more out of the class if you do your readings on time.

Annual Editions Article Reviews

Each student will complete three article reviews over the course of the semester. Each review will consist of a 1–2 page summary and description of the article and how it relates to the themes discussed in the class.

Class Schedule

Week 1: Introduction, Course Philosophy and Syllabus Review

Week 1: Adolescence as a Period of Development
Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 1
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

Adolescence: Pathologizing a Normal Process, Michael D. Newcomb, *Counseling Psychologist,* July 1996.

> Our current understanding of adolescence focuses on pathology. Michael Newcomb proposes an alternate view—one that emphasizes understanding the adolescent's development of *independence and identity* in the context of familial, school, and societal influences.

Week 2: Different Pathways in Adolescent Development: Cohort, Gender, and Diversity

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 2

Week 3: Physical Changes and their Psychological Effects

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 3
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

Inside the Teen Brain, Shannon Brownlee, *U.S. News & World Report,* August 9, 1999.

> Until recently, neuroscientists mistakenly believed that the brain was fully developed by *puberty.* However, current research indicates that an enormous amount of neurological development occurs during

the teen years. These changes in development may be related to adolescents' moodiness and their problems with making good decisions.

Yesterday's Precocious Puberty Is Norm Today, Jane E. Brody, *New York Times*, November 30, 1999.

The onset of *puberty* in girls is occurring approximately a year earlier than was previously reported. Girls should be educated about *menstruation* and sex earlier than parents may realize. Those white girls who begin breast development before age 7 and those black girls who do so before age 6 should be evaluated for early puberty.

The 1997 Body Image Survey Results, David M. Garner, *Psychology Today*, January/February 1997.

The responses of 3,452 women and 548 men to a 1996 survey on *body image* were analyzed. In this report, the effects of age, gender, the media, and exercise were discussed. Overall, women were more dissatisfied with their bodies than were men, and *dieting* was very common—even in girls as young as 9 years old.

Adolescent Male Athletes: Body Image, Diet, and Exercise, Pamela S. McKay Parks and Marsha H. Read, *Adolescence*, Fall 1997.

Body image, dieting, and attitudes toward exercise of cross-country runners and football players were compared. Results indicated that football players were more satisfied with their bodies and had healthier attitudes toward eating than did runners. The importance of educating boys to value the type of body they have was discussed in this essay.

A Study of White Middle-Class Adolescent Boys' Responses to "Semenarche" (The First Ejaculation), James H. Stein and Lynn Whisnant Reiser, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Volume 23, Number 3, 1994.

This study presents survey and interview data from adolescent males' recollections of their first ejaculation. *Semenarche* is more invisible and is less of a *rite of passage* for adolescent males than *menarche* is for females. Subjects reported few negative feelings about the experience, but they did feel unprepared.

The Consequences of Insufficient Sleep for Adolescents: Links between Sleep and Emotional Regulation, Ronald E. Dahl, *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 1999.

Although research indicates that sufficient sleep is essential for optimal functioning, many experts believe that most adolescents do not get the amount of sleep that they need. Sleep deprivation may result in problems with *mood, attention, and academic performance.*

Week 4: Cognitive Growth in Adolescence

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 4
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

Gender Gap in Math Scores Is Closing, Bridget Murray, *APA Monitor*, November 1995.

Bridget Murray discusses both *biological and environmental factors* that potentially affect *mathematics achievement*.

The EQ Factor, Nancy Gibbs, *Time*, October 2, 1995.

Personality and *emotional qualities* may be better predictors of academic, occupational, and social success than traditional types of intelligence as measured by *IQ tests*.

Week 5: Social Reasoning in Adolescence

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 5
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

Raising Better Boys, Geoffrey Canada, *Educational Leadership*, December 1999/January 2000.

Boys are much more likely than girls either to *commit acts of violence or to be victims of violence*. To raise better boys, we must provide them with appropriate *mentors*, expose them to values that will help them grow *morally*, and teach them tolerance of others.

Week 6: Identity and the Self in Adolescence

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 6
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

Ethnicity, Identity Formation, and Risk Behavior among Adolescents of Mexican Descent, Arik V. Marcell, *The Education Digest*, April 1995.

Arik Marcell proposes that an understanding of the *ethnic identification* and degree of acculturation of youth of *Mexican descent* provides insight into outcomes such as school success, gang behavior, and drug use.

"I'm Just Who I Am," Jack E. White, *Time*, May 5, 1997.

The developmental task of *identity formation* is compounded for adolescents who are *multiracial*. American society as a whole also needs to cope with the increasing number of multiracial citizens. Golfer Tiger Woods's background is used as an illustration.

Week 7: Moral Judgment and the Development of Values

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 7
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

The Moral Development of Children, William Damon, *Scientific American*, August 1999.

> Theories emphasizing biology, learning, and cognition have tried to account for the ***development of morality*** in children. In fact, many factors influence moral development, including family, school, and community.

End of Week 7: Test 1

Week 8: Family Relationships and Influences

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 8
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

Adolescence: Whose Hell Is It?, Virginia Rutter, *Psychology Today*, January/February 1995.

> Despite society's stereotypes, adolescents are not normally hostile and rebellious. Rather, if there are *problems in a family*, it is frequently because *parents* are facing their own crises involving marriage, work, and power.

How Teens Strain the Family, Murray Dubin, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 16, 1994.

> Although most teens and most parents turn out fine, different kinds of problems may be faced by *single-parent families* compared to intact families and by *mothers as compared to fathers.*

"Don't Talk Back!" Richard M. Lerner and Cheryl K. Olson, *Parents*, December 1994.

> As *young adolescents* mature in their *thinking abilities*, they are more likely to argue with their *parents* about almost anything.

Effects of Paternal Absence on Male Adolescents' Peer Relations and Self-Image, Lee A. Beaty, *Adolescence*, Winter 1995.

> Masculine *self-image and peer relationships* of middle school boys with *fathers* present in the home were compared with middle school boys with *absent fathers*. Boys with absent fathers were found to have both poorer masculine self-image and poorer peer adjustment.

Week 9: Peer Relationships and Influences

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 9
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

The Truth about Tweens, Barbara Kantrowitz and Pat Wingert, *Newsweek*, October 18, 1999.

Tweens, *children between ages 8 and 14*, are frequently more sophisticated than were previous generations. However, today's tweens are more likely to be growing up with two working parents or in single-parent households. Experts fear tweens are not getting enough adult guidance and may be overly influenced by *peers and media.*

Inside the Crazy Culture of Kids Sports, Andrew Ferguson, *Time*, July 12, 1999.

Children's *sports* have become highly competitive, time consuming, and expensive commitments. Although many children and parents enjoy participation, other parents become overly competitive, and children may be at risk for injury and stress.

The Secret Life of Teens, John Leland, *Newsweek*, May 10, 1999.

With greater access to the *Internet*, more teens are spending time alone with their computers. Quite often parents do not know what their teen is doing online or how to evaluate the activity. Experts suggest that parents should keep computers in family rooms and monitor the sites that their children visit.

Week 10: Schools as Contexts and Influences

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 10
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

Schools the Source of Rough Transitions, Beth Azar, *APA Monitor*, June 1996.

Middle schools and junior high schools are organized very differently from elementary schools. The well-documented *drop in academic motivation and achievement* that occurs during transitions to new school settings may be partially related to a mismatch between the needs of *early adolescence* and the middle school environment.

The Cheating Game, Carolyn Kleiner and Mary Lord, *U.S. News & World Report*, November 22, 1999.

Surveys indicate that *cheating in high schools and colleges* is rampant. Experts attribute the causes of cheating to parents who do students' work for them, schools that tolerate cheating, and students who feel that there are no other ways to meet the demands of school.

Musings in the Wake of Columbine: What Can Schools Do?, Mary Anne Raywid and Libby Oshiyama, *Phi Delta Kappan*, February 2000.

Students who view their *school as a community* behave better and care more about other students. To create this perspective, schools should be small and teachers must emphasize *moral, social, and emotional growth*. School staff and students must commit to being responsible for each other.

Mommy, What's a Classroom?, Bill Roorbach, *New York Times Magazine*, February 2, 1997.

Home schooling is an *educational alternative* that is gaining popularity now that it is legal throughout the United States. Concern centers on ensuring the *educational quality of home schools* and the appropriate *social development* of home schoolers.

The LD Label for Relatively Well-Functioning Students: A Critical Analysis, Michael Gordon, Lawrence Lewandowski, and Shelby Keiser, *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, November/December 1999.

The increased prevalence of students being labeled *learning disabled* has led experts to question what the LD label actually means, and what are appropriate interventions for LD students.

Good Mentoring Keeps At-Risk Youth in School, Bridget Murray, *APA Monitor*, September 1995.

Research suggests that the use of *mentors* can be an effective *intervention* for youths who are *at risk* of being high school *dropouts*. Successful mentors can be adults or older schoolmates, but at least one study indicates that a poor mentor-student relationship can increase the likelihood of the student's dropping out of school.

End of Week 10: Test 2

Week 11: Sexuality. Physical Change and Relationships

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 11

Gay Families Come Out, Barbara Kantrowitz, *Newsweek*, November 4, 1996.

The number of children with at least one *gay parent* seems to be increasing. Although not extensively studied, the research to date indicates that these children are at no more risk of psychological problems than are the children of heterosexuals. However, these families frequently face discrimination and prejudice.

Too Young to Date?, Debra Morgenstern Katz, *Parents,* October 1995.

How should parents handle their *young adolescents' desire to date?* Although dating should be discouraged in preteens if possible, keep lines of communication open and discuss issues troubling the adolescent honestly and calmly, Debra Morgenstern Katz suggests.

A Clack of Tiny Sparks, Bernard Cooper, *Harper's,* January 1991.

Bernard Cooper's memoir recounts his acknowledgement of his own *homosexuality* the year he was 14. His descriptions of his attempts at a heterosexual make-out party and his friends' contemptuous misinformation about gays highlight the isolation he felt.

Boys Call Me Cow, Charol Shakeshaft, Laurie Mandel, Yolanda M. Johnson, Janice Sawyer, Mary Ann Hergenrother, and Ellen Barber, *Educational Leadership,* October 1997.

The authors of this report found that although *harassment* of students by *peers in middle school* is pervasive, few students report it to adults. When the students did report it, their complaints tended to be minimized, and no action was taken to discourage harassment. Strategies for decreasing harassment are suggested.

Trends in Sexual Activity among Adolescent American Women: 1982–1995, Susheela Singh and Jacqueline E. Darroch, *Family Planning Perspectives,* September/October 1999.

Sexual behavior of adolescent females was investigated in 1982, 1988, and 1995. In general, significant increases in sexual activity were found between 1982 and 1995. There were fewer changes between 1988 and 1995. Differences in sexual activity associated with age, *race/ethnicity,* and income were also discussed.

Reflections on Two Decades of Research on Teen Sexual Behavior and Pregnancy, Douglas Kirby, *Journal of School Health,* March 1999.

During the past 20 years, research on sexual activity in adolescence has increased in its scientific rigor. The factors predicting *high-risk sexual activity* and the *effectiveness of intervention strategies and education* were evaluated in light of this research.

Young Adults and AIDS: "It Can't Happen to Me," Nathan Seppa, *APA Monitor,* January 1997.

Although the rate of *HIV infection is increasing among heterosexual young adults,* condom use by this population is not consistent. Psychologists propose that impediments to condom use include difficulty in communicating with one's partner, embarrassment about purchasing condoms, and discontinuance of condom use in an ongoing relationship.

Week 12: Psychological Disturbances and Antisocial Behavior

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapters 12 and 13
Annual Editions: Adolescent Psychology

Stop Blaming Kids and TV: Who Us?, Mike Males, *The Progressive*, October 1997.

Recent research indicates that the *media* has less influence on the behavior of adolescents than is commonly believed. Adolescents' use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco is predicted far better by whether adults in their households use those substances.

Programs Go Beyond "Just Saying No," Bridget Murray, *APA Monitor*, November 1995.

New *drug-abuse* prevention programs are attempting to create a fabric that integrates adolescents, parents, *schools*, and communities. It is hoped that these programs will increase adolescents' involvement in school while incorporating parental and community values.

Courtroom Justice for Teens—by Teens, Kathiann M. Kowalski, *Current Health 2*, April/May 1999.

Teen courts that are staffed by teen attorneys, teen judges, and teen juries are being used increasingly to try *adolescents charged with misdemeanors*. Sentences generally involve community service. The teens serving in a legal capacity rarely go on to commit crimes themselves.

Looking for Trouble, Jodie Morse, *Time*, April 24, 2000.

Criminal profiling, including use of Mosaic software, a threat-assessment instrument, is being used to *predict which school-age children may commit acts of violence*. Critics believe that these methods will not only be ineffective but that their use will violate the privacy of students.

Escaping from the Darkness, Howard Chua-Eoan, *Time*, May 31, 1999.

As many as five percent of preteens and teenagers may suffer from *clinical depression*. Which of these children should receive antidepressant medications, and for how long, is a debated issue. In this essay, Howard Chua-Eoan provides cases demonstrating the pros and cons of the use of antidepressants.

Adolescent Attraction to Cults, Eagan Hunter, *Adolescence*, Fall 1998.

Adolescents who are alienated from their families, who are pressured to excel, and who do not have clear values may be attracted to *cults.* Eagan Hunter proposes that helping adolescents *develop clear identities* and realistic goals may protect them from cult influences.

Week 13: Work and Career Development

Reading: Sprinthall & Collins, Chapter 14

Teen Jobs: How Much Is Too Much?, Jon Marshall, *The Christian Science Monitor,* November 21, 1997.

A *part-time job* may help students develop independence and a sense of responsibility. However, working over 20 hours a week may interfere with school work and with participation in *extracurricular activities.* In addition, part-time jobs rarely provide adolescents with skills that will be valuable in their futures.

Week 14: Open Week: Current issues in Early Adolescent Development

Reading: TBA

CHAPTER 18

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Richard P. Lipka
Pittsburg State University

CONTEXTUAL DESCRIPTION

This syllabus is for one of the courses leading to a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership at Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas (satisfies requirements in Missouri and Oklahoma as well). Upon completion of the degree, recipients may petition the state for their building level (principal) certificate.

Our 36-hour program is divided roughly into thirds with this course embedded at the end of the second third of the course work sequence. The course is typically offered in the spring to a cohort of 20 students who have already completed a curriculum development course offered in the first third of the program.

Equally important in this contextual description is my overriding goal of having my teaching characterized by the ideas embedded in the psychoeducational component of leadership education and curriculum development. To that end, I employ elements of Keller's System of Personalized Instruction, mastery learning, and contracting. Part of this commitment involves the utilization of continuous formative evaluation cycles/strategies

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until 100% mastery is achieved by the student. My major goal is for the students to comprehend these teaching/learning strategies by being participants in the use of said strategies.

PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Department of Special Services and Leadership Studies

Course Number: SSLS 835
Title: Elementary School and Middle School Curriculum
Credit Hours: 3 hours
Course Time Schedule: 5:30–8:20 PM; Wednesday
Room: ICC
Instructor: Dr. Richard P. Lipka
Office Phone:(620) 235-4486
Office: 304 Hughes Hall
Fax: (620) 235-4520
e-mail: rplipka@pittstate.edu
Office Hours:
  Mon.: 10–12; 1–3,
  Tues.: 10–12; 1–3
  Wed.: 10–12; 5–5:30 at ICC
  Thurs.: 10–11; 1:30 – 4:00 PM
**Other times by appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Focuses upon past and present curriculum design for elementary, middle and secondary school students. Emphasis is given to the establishment of goals and objectives, the assessment of needs, and the selection and organization of content, activities, and evaluation practices.

II. COURSE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

A. To demonstrate an understanding of different curriculum theories.
B. To demonstrate an understanding of various curriculum approaches.
C. To summarize major research related to curriculum.
D. To identify sources of the curriculum.
E. To identify the components of effective teaching/learning situations.
F. To analyze innovations on the basis of curriculum theory.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

Beane, J.A., & Lipka, R.P. (2000). When the Kids Come First: Enhancing Self-Esteem. Troy, New York: Educators International Press.

Raths, L.E. (1998). Meeting the Needs of Children: Creating Trust and Security. Troy, New York: Educators International Press.

In addition to the text book, numerous films and videos will be utilized. *Note:* For citations, reference page, and other matters of style, please use the fifth edition publication manual of the American Psychological Association, 2002.

IV. TEACHING STRATEGIES

Large group, small group and individualized instruction will characterize the course. The 1–3–6 consensus building activity, jigsaw and expert groups are the three most utilized small group formats.

V. EVALUATION

A. Course Requirements/Grading

1. Grade of "D"
    - (a) Attend and participate in class and class activities.
    - (b) Read the textbooks.
    - (c) Prepare one question for each designated chapter in the textbook. The questions should be directed to the instructor for comment. The first question will be collected January 22, 2003. (Please read the two books side by side).
2. Grade of "C"
    - (a) Complete the "D" grade requirements.
    - (b) Complete group activity: "Teachers Teaching Teachers" (TTT)
3. Grade of "B"
    - (a) Complete the "C" grade requirements.
    - (b) Complete the expert group[2] activity.
4. Grade of "A"
    - (a) Complete the "B" grade requirements.
    - (b) Complete the "major written project[3]."

B. *"C" Activity:* Teachers Teaching Teachers

1. The Children's School
2. Elementary Grades
3. Smallwood Drive School
4. Middle Grades
5. E. Boyer: High School:

6. A Secondary Grades
7. Proposed Four Year Program
8. The Eight Year Study
9. Secondary Grades

As a group you will be responsible for a two hour session of instruction for your peers in this class. You must also devise a culminating activity (authentic assessment) that will allow you to ascertain comprehension of your instruction. After evaluating the individual assessments you will submit the individual assessments to me by 04/09/03.

A brief task analysis is as follows:

1. Develop two hour instructional session.
2. Develop culminating activity.
3. Evaluate culminating activity (using formative and summative strategies) for each class member.
4. Submit evaluated products to me by 04/09/03.

C. "B" Group work: Three Options

1. OPTION #I: EXPERT GROUP

Work in small, cooperative groups with each group becoming an expert in one of the following aspects of curriculum/education:

- Emotional Literacy
- Environmental Literacy
- Technological Literacy
- Multi-Cultural Literacy
- Full Service Schools
- Making Big Schools Small
- Television and Media Literacy
- Service Learning
- Continuous Progress Formats
- Inter/Multi-disciplinary curriculum
- Intergenerational Learning
- Block Time Core Programs: Single Teacher or more
- Serving Educationally Underserved Populations
- Crisis management planning
- Developmentally appropriate instruction
- Advisor–Advisee Programs
- Transitioning issues: Elementary to Middle and/or Middle to High School

Your expertise will be demonstrated in a number of ways:

- Written

  Each group member will submit four ANNOTATED bibliographies reflecting the selected topic.

  Prepare a written implementation document for your topic of record.

  In considering implementation strategies you should address such questions as:

  - What role(s) will the school board have in implementing this topic?
  - What role(s) will the superintendent have in implementing this topic?
  - What will the principal's instructional leadership look like?
  - What specific roles/behaviors and attitudes will teachers need to display in order to implement this topic?
  - What specific role/behaviors and attitudes will students need to display to be successful with this topic?
  - What sort of instructional resources will be needed to implement the topic?
  - What will the physical environment look like?

- Oral (Approximately 1 hour with Q/A)

  Overview(theory/research) of your topic

  "Walk through" of your implementation document.

2. OPTION #2: TARGETED PROBLEM SOLVING

   Using the targeted problem solving approach (LeTendre and Lipka, 1999, 2000) examine an actual curriculum issue in your work setting. Some illustrative examples are:

   "Our fifth and sixth graders are having a difficult time solving story problems in mathematics."

   "No one seems to be pleased with our comprehensive health curriculum in the middle school."

   "That remedial reading program isn't getting the job done in our elementary school."

   "We seem to have community service rather than a service learning program in our middle school."

- Written

  A portfolio containing all of the elements generated by the steps in the targeted problem solving process.

- Oral (approximately one hour with question/answer period) A "walk through" of your written portfolio.
  Note: The second week of class will be devoted to a discussion of the elements in targeted problem-solving.

3. OPTION #3: "TOOL KIT"
   Select one of the eight emotional needs in the Raths book and undertake the following activity pattern:

- Written
  Each group member will submit four annotated bibliographies reflecting the selected emotional need.
  A three-part written document that includes:
    - the theoretical underpinnings of the need
    - develop multiple tools to assess the status of the need in known student populations.
    - Pilot tools (one per group member) with known student populations and report out your findings for example, quality of tool, ease of implementation, information gained from students, etc.
- Oral (approximately 1 hour with Q/A) walk through of your three part document.

MAJOR WRITTEN PROJECT[3]

A detailed body of work which will enhance your knowledge of preschool early childhood, elementary, or middle-level education and/or increase your effectiveness to teach and/or administer in a preschool/early childhood, elementary or middle-level setting.

The following are examples to serve as a catalyst:

- Develop a resource unit that includes teacher/pupil planning and utilizes the problems or needs approach to curriculum development.
- Complete the grant application for the U.S. Department of Education Research Grant Program "Teachers as Researchers." Or, some other finding source. The focus of the grant would be to secure funds to improve your teaching and/or administrating of a preschool/early childhood, elementary or middle school.
- Develop a local curriculum alignment and evaluation plan that incorporates Kansas Quality Performance Accreditation and Kansas North Central Association guidelines.
- Any other project of your choice which you can defend as better meeting your needs or having more utility for your teaching/administrating duties.

Note #1: A 20 minute summary of your project must be given in a classroom presentation.

Note #2: Your written project proposal must be approved prior to the submission of your written project.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

01/15/03	Overview of class; form working groups "Teachers Teaching Teachers" (TTT)
01/22/03	Video with discussion/TTT work time
01/29/03	Video with discussion/TTT work time
02/05/03	Video with discussion/TTT work time—share culminating activity plan with instructor.
02/12/03	Video with discussion/form "B" expert groups/TTT work time
02/19/03	"The Children's School" presentation/expert group work time
02/26/03	"Smallwood Drive School" presentation/expert group work time
03/05/03	"Boyer: High school—A Proposed Four Year Program" presentation/expert group work time
03/12/03	"The Eight Year Study" presentation/expert group work time.
03/19/03	Spring Break—no class
03/26/03	Discuss chapter questions and expert group work time
04/02/03	Discuss chapter questions and expert group work time
04/09/03	Discuss chapter questions and expert group work time
04/16/03	Expert group and "A" presentations
04/23/03	Full work period, no formal class
04/30/03	Expert group and "A" presentations
05/07/03	Expert group and "A" presentations LCEQ and records check

CHAPTER 19

TEACHER PREPARATION, LICENSURE, AND RECRUITMENT

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform is committed to making high-performing middle-grades schools the norm rather than the exception. We believe that specialized preparation of middle-grades educators will produce competent and caring teachers who are well-qualified to teach young adolescents. Therefore, we strongly support the specialized preparation of middle-level teachers at both the pre-service and graduate levels. To that end, we make the following recommendations:

- States should establish mandatory requirements for middle-level teacher licensure as an incentive for both institutions and individuals to pursue a middle-level specialization.
- Colleges and universities should establish teacher preparation programs that prepare practicing and future teachers to work specifically with young adolescents, and assign faculty and staff with expertise in middle-level education to these programs.
- Districts and schools should hire middle-grades teachers to teach the subjects they are prepared to teach. Furthermore, they should focus

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on creating the conditions in which both teachers and students can succeed.

- States should make middle-level teacher licensure specific to the middle grades (e.g., grades 5 through 8, or 6 through 9) and not overlap significantly with licensure for the elementary or high school levels.
- Middle-grades licensure for content-area teachers (such as language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies) should be middle-grades subject-specific and middle-grades standards-based, including concentrated study in two or more academic areas. For other middle-grades teachers (e.g., special education, bilingual education), specialized training in middle-level education and early adolescence should be required.
- Colleges and universities should work in partnership with districts and schools to provide ongoing professional development and sustained support for both new and veteran middle-level teachers. This will not only help retain good teachers, but also ensure their continual learning.{NBL}

In recent years, many organizations and individuals have called for teacher education reform. The Forum is specifically concerned with creating excellent middle-grades teachers who are prepared to teach challenging content to young adolescents. In order to ensure that middle-grades teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach their students well, teacher preparation programs must focus on three critical areas:

- *Academic excellence.* Middle-grades teachers must have a deep understanding of both the subjects they teach and how to help young adolescents learn the concepts and skills of demanding curricula.
- *Developmental responsiveness.* Middle-grades teachers must have a solid understanding of early adolescence, as well as the skills and dispositions to work with young adolescents' unique developmental challenges. These teachers should know how to motivate young adolescents by engaging them actively in their own learning.
- *Equity and cultural diversity.* Middle-grades teachers must have a wide repertoire of skills, mixed with a sustained sense of hope, support, and expectations for achievement, to enhance learning and development for the most racially and ethnically diverse school population in our nation's history.

Ultimately, the focus of all teacher preparation programs must be on results. Teacher preparation programs must provide prospective teachers with field-based experiences where they have the opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life settings. Graduates should be able to demonstrate that they contribute to middle-grades students' healthy development and their ability to perform at high levels on multiple indicators of academic success. Moreover, they should leave no young adolescent behind.

THE NEED FOR SPECIALIZED PREPARATION OF MIDDLE-GRADES TEACHERS

Teachers are the linchpin in students' learning and healthy development. In his preface to the Education Commission of the States' (ECS) report *In Pursuit of Quality Teaching* (2000), Governor of Wyoming and 1999–2000 ECS Chairman Jim Geringer wrote:

> An effective teacher is the single most important factor affecting student learning. It's more important than standards, more important than class size, more important than how much money is spent. Each of these is significant, but the quality of teaching dwarfs them all. (p. 2)

Studies conducted by the University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center (Sanders & Rivers, 1996) and by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (Darling-Hammond, 1996) bolster Geringer's assertion that teachers are a critical influence. In the press to respond to public schools' urgent need for more teachers, policymakers must remember that the *essential* need is for more *highly qualified* teachers. We cannot sacrifice the quality of middle-grades education and the next generation of young adolescents to the immediate problem of teacher shortages. Schools must hire teachers who know how to help students meet rigorous content and performance standards and who educate them to live in an increasingly diverse, democratic society. In middle-level schools, with their myriad challenges, high-quality teacher preparation is a must.

Turning Points 2000 (Jackson & Davis, 2000) reports a growing consensus to support specialized teacher preparation at the middle-grades level:

> Numerous studies reveal that middle-grades teachers, principals, and other stakeholders support specialized teacher preparation of middle-grades teachers (Jenkins & Jenkins, 1991; McEwin, Dickinson, & Hamilton, 2000; Scales & McEwin, 1996).

Many national associations, including both the National Middle School Association and the National Association for Secondary School Principals, support the specialized preparation of middle-grades teachers, as do several regional groups (such as the Southern Regional Education Board).

Some states—including North Carolina, Georgia, and Ohio—have taken significant steps in creating specialized teacher preparation and licensure programs.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has adopted specialized standards and performance assessments for teachers at the middle level.

The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification includes separate middle-grades teacher education standards in its popular publication *NASDTEC Outcome-Based Standards and Portfolio Assessment* (1994).

The National Middle School Association has performance-based middle-level teacher preparation standards for undergraduate and graduate degree programs. These standards are approved by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and are used in the accreditation process (NMSA, 2002).

A national study of 2,139 middle-grades teachers in six states reveals that the greater the number of middle-grades courses middle-grades teachers have, the more favorably they rate their teacher preparation programs (Scales & McEwin, 1994).

Despite the need for and perceived value of specialized teacher preparation, relatively few middle-grades teachers in this country receive such preparation before they begin their careers (McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 1996; Scales, 1992; Scales & McEwin, 1994). The National Forum believes that the time is right to establish specialized middle-level teacher preparation programs that prepare the next generation of teachers for the next generation of students. Yet, research shows that specialized teacher preparation will not become the norm until middle-level licensure is universally required. Only then will teacher preparation institutions be compelled to offer comprehensive middle-level programs, and will teachers of young adolescents have the specialized preparation they need in order to become effective teachers.

THE MANDATE FOR MIDDLE-LEVEL TEACHER LICENSURE

The last decade has demonstrated that specialized middle-level teacher preparation programs are more prevalent in states where middle-level teacher licensure is both available and mandatory. Yet, the majority of states that offer middle-level licensure do not require middle-level teachers to hold that credential to teach young adolescents. As a result, most young adolescents are taught by teachers who have specialized in or taught other age groups, or were unable to obtain training to prepare them adequately for a middle-level position. A student's ability to succeed in the classroom is compromised without teachers who are expert in middle-level education (Cooney, 1999; Jackson &Davis, 2000; McEwin & Dickinson, 1997).

Despite the need for well-prepared teachers, nationally, only 20 percent of teachers are formally prepared to teach at the middle level (and that figure is much lower in some states). The lack of subject expertise is equally glaring. For instance, approximately 30 percent of grades 7 and 8 teachers assigned to teach math or science lack the subject knowledge to do so. Teacher quality especially suffers in poor urban and rural schools, where even larger percentages of teachers teach outside their fields and areas of certification. As Kati Haycock reports, "Poor students, minority students, and lower achieving students of all races are far more likely than other students to be taught by undereducated teachers" (Haycock & Ames, 2000).

Some signs of improvement are beginning to appear. A national study of teacher licensure regulations conducted by Gaskill (2002) found that increasing numbers of states are adopting specialized middle-level licensure regulations for teachers. The study found that 43 states and the District of Columbia now have some form of specialized licensure requirement for middle-level teaching.[1] This number has increased substantially over the last several decades.[2]

While these results are encouraging, credentials still are not necessarily *required* for middle-level teachers. Gaskill found that only 21 of the 43 states that offered some form of middle-level teaching credential (a license, certification, or endorsement) required middle-level teachers to have this credential. In the majority of states, almost any kind of teaching credential allows a teacher to take a middle-level position. Such leeway is rarely permitted for those teaching elementary or high school students, a reflection of middle-grades schools' low priority among state departments of education, policymakers, teacher preparation institutions, and other stakeholders.

In too many states, licenses cover overlapping grade levels (e.g., grades K–8, 5–8, 7–12). This discourages prospective teachers from enrolling in specialized middle-grades preparation programs, because they can acquire a license that covers six (7–12) or nine (K–8) grade levels in the same length of study that is required to qualify for a middle-grades license that covers only four grade levels (5–8). As noted in *Turning Points 2000*:

This dilemma can be avoided by greatly reducing or eliminating the grade level overlaps between elementary, middle, and high school licensure regulations. Prospective teachers should have the opportunity to decide upon a career which focuses on a single developmental age group and a rigorous preparation in the subjects they will teach. This specialized professional preparation should be rewarded by a distinctive license that accurately informs all concerned that the teacher receiving it has demonstrated his or her abilities to teach young adolescents effectively. (Jackson & Davis, p. 103)

In an attempt to respond to these credentialing issues, some states have launched "endorsement" options, rather than authentic teaching licenses. But, however well-intentioned, such add-on endorsements have done little to ensure the special preparation of middle-level teachers. Typically, in endorsement plans, prospective teachers must first earn a degree and a license in elementary education, a secondary subject area, or some other teaching field. Then, by extending their study, prospective teachers can also be licensed to teach at the middle level. Endorsement requirements often amount to little more than two or three courses that may or may not focus directly on middle-level teaching. However, since most states allow elementary- and secondary-level teachers to teach young adolescents, few teachers choose even this limited route to middle-level specialization (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996).

In summary, progress has been made in the number of states adopting specialized middle-level teacher licensure; 86 percent of all states now offer a specific middle-level credential as an option. However, only 42 percent actually require a middle-level license for teaching in middle-level classrooms. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform joins others in advocating that every state require middle-level teachers to have middle-level credentials. This will encourage more colleges and universities to offer rigorous programs that focus directly on middle-level teaching, and districts and schools to hire teachers with the appropriate preparation.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF MIDDLE-LEVEL TEACHER-PREPARATION PROGRAMS

A high-quality middle-grades teacher-preparation program includes many of the components that other top-notch teacher-preparation programs offer (e.g., integrating technology, forming collaborative partnerships, promoting teacher leadership). It also has the following key elements that are especially appropriate to this grade span:

- *A focus on academic excellence.* Middle-grades teachers must learn how to provide their students with rigorous curriculum and instruction that are both developmentally appropriate and responsive to the needs of diverse learners. They must have a deep understanding of both their subject and how to teach it so that every student learns and demonstrates significant progress in his or her performance. In addition, middle-grades teachers must learn how to assess what students know and are able to do in order to continually improve both their teaching and their students' learning.

- *Middle-level curriculum.* High-quality preparation programs focus on the study of middle-level curriculum, with an emphasis on discipline-specific, integrative, and interdisciplinary approaches. Teachers must have the knowledge, dispositions, and skills to set high expectations for all students, provide them with a rigorous and challenging curriculum, engage the students in learning, and make sure that students have the support they need to participate and succeed.
- *Concentrated study in two or more broad teaching fields.* Effective middle-grades teacher preparation programs prepare *content-area* teacher candidates in two or more academic disciplines (e.g., mathematics and science). This helps prospective teachers build a thorough academic underpinning of content, pedagogy, and the connections and interrelationships among the academic disciplines and other areas of knowledge.
- *A concern for developmental responsiveness.* An effective teacher preparation program must provide teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work effectively with young adolescents. Thus, the program must encompass three specific areas:
- *Early adolescence and the needs of young adolescents* (ages 10 to 14). All middle-level teachers should be experts on the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of young adolescents. This knowledge can be attained through formal study of early adolescence and direct work with young adolescents.
- *The philosophy and organization of middle-level education.* The principles of middle-school philosophy and school organization (e.g., teams, advisories, and exploratory classes) can be mastered through formal study and experience in middle-level schools. Teachers need to learn the importance of personalizing middle-level education so that each child has one committed advocate in the school. Teachers must also learn how to involve parents/families as partners in the educational process.
- *Middle-grades planning, teaching, and assessment.* Middle-level teacher-preparation programs offer numerous opportunities to translate developmental and content knowledge into successful practice. They emphasize a wide range of developmentally appropriate instructional techniques that promote student learning, such as cooperative learning, independent inquiry, use of multi-media, and real-world problem solving. They teach prospective teachers how to employ a wide variety of assessment techniques (e.g., traditional testing, portfolios, and exhibitions) to monitor student learning and improve instruction.

They help teachers disaggregate data and look closely at student work so that no young adolescent or group of students is left behind.

- *An emphasis on equity and diversity.* Middle-grades teacher-preparation programs help teachers understand individual differences and how to differentiate instruction so that every student—regardless of socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, gender, first language, or ability—has access to a rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- *Inclusive practices.* High quality teacher preparation programs provide teachers with a wide range of instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of students with different learning styles, intelligences, and abilities. These strategies may include, for example, the use of manipulatives and hands-on activities, cooperative learning, the arts, technology, service-learning, and other strategies that help students gather information, make meaning, and apply what they learn in real-world settings.
- *Cultural diversity.* Effective middle-grades teacher preparation programs recognize that early adolescence is a time when students are exploring their own identities while also developing a growing interest in the world around them. Middle-grades teacher preparation programs must help teachers learn how to understand and respect their students' norms and values, as well as those of the students' families, and the larger community in which they live.
- *Early and continuing field experiences.* Field experiences provide prospective middle-grades teachers with invaluable learning about young adolescents, middle-level curriculum, and middle-level instruction. A promising approach is an apprentice-based model of teacher preparation, with teachers-in-training placed in high-performing middle-grades schools and participating in seminars built around field experiences. Experiences in the community are another way in which prospective teachers can deepen their understanding of students and their families. Finally, the National Forum encourages teacher preparation programs, in partnership with middle-grades schools, to design induction programs that provide new teachers with initial orientation, mentoring, ongoing professional development, and opportunities to take on leadership roles as they embark on their teaching careers.

CONCLUSION

Young adolescents need and deserve caring, knowledgeable, and skilled teachers who want to teach them and have the professional preparation to do so successfully. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades

Reform believes that middle-level teacher preparation programs must be different from programs designed to prepare teachers of young children in elementary schools or older adolescents in high schools. Again, we urge colleges and universities to design teacher preparation programs that specifically prepare future and current teachers to work with this age group and to ensure that students meet academic standards. Further, we strongly recommend that states establish mandatory requirements for middle-level licensure that do not overlap significantly with licensure for elementary or high school teaching. This will serve as an incentive for both institutions and individuals to pursue middle-level specialization and for districts and schools to hire teachers who are well prepared to teach this age level.

NOTES

1. The seven states that reported no specialized licensure regulations were California, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Montana, and New Jersey.
2. For example, only 2 states had middle-level teacher-licensure regulations in 1968 (Pumerantz, 1969), 25 in 1982 (McEwin and Allen, 1983), and 33 in 1992 (Valentine and Mogar, 1992).

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CHAPTER 20

GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVATION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM

P. Maureen Musser and Rosalyn Edelson
Willamette University

Willamette University's School of Education in Salem, Oregon offers a ten-month program that allows candidates to earn a Master of Arts in Teaching degree and complete requirements for an Oregon initial teaching license. The MAT program begins in August so that students commence their practicum experience in the public schools before school starts. During the fall semester, students complete two practicum experiences. In the spring semester, they complete full-time student teaching from January through the last day of school. There are approximately 25 to 30 students in the Middle Level Cohort each year.

With a total of over 1000 hours in the public schools, it is critically important to help students integrate theory and practice; coursework on campus and field experiences. To accomplish this, we consider the school/university partnership essential. Classroom teachers who supervise practica and student teaching are full partners in the process of teacher preparation.

One important tool useful in the integration of university coursework between classes and between the university and the public schools is an

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instrument entitled *Guidelines for Observation and Participation*. The faculty of the School of Education developed this instrument with substantial input from public school teachers and administrators through task forces and on-going School Partners Workshops. Supervising teachers, student teachers, and university supervisors met in School Partner Workshops to discuss various roles in implementing the *Guidelines for Observation and Participation* that are specifically designed to address pre-student teaching with early adolescents.

The *Guidelines for Observation and Participation* instrument provides suggested and required activities as well as discussion and reflection topics designed to help students become familiar with their schools and school communities. It also addresses becoming familiar with school personnel, policies, and procedures. Finally, the guidelines assist supervising teachers in preparing their student teachers to take over their full-time student teaching responsibilities in the spring semester.

For university supervisors meeting with their advisees weekly and for individual course instructors, this instrument provides a source of discussion topics and specific assignments. Use of these guidelines helps establish common expectations and understandings about the experiences provided at the school sites as well as for the integration of curriculum among the various MAT courses. There are specific assignments aligned with the guidelines in several fall courses including Multicultural Education, Planning and Implementation of Instruction, Issues in Education, and Educational and Developmental Psychology. The *Guidelines for Observation and Participation* help make the field experiences and the campus courses more meaningful because the relationship between them is clear.

The ultimate purpose of providing a single tool to be used by all instructors, school supervisors, and students is to strengthen the integration of theory and practice, and the integration of teacher preparation curriculum. The goal of integration is to extend and deepen the experience by addressing various perspectives, to encourage reflective practice, and to take a holistic approach to professional development.

GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVATION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Student ____
School ____
Supervising Teacher(s) ________________________________
University Supervisor _________________________________
Grade ______________ Level/Subject Area ________________

The following "Observation and Participation Guidelines" include activities for you to complete during your student teaching practicum. Keep notes on your observations and activities in the school and school community, your responses to what you observe, and reflections on your experiences. Your notes will serve as a basis for discussion and for written reports required by your university instructors or by your supervising teachers.

An asterisk and the name of a course follow some of the activities. This indicates that there will be additional information regarding this activity, requirements, and due dates provided in the syllabus and by the instructor of the specific courses mentioned. The guidelines are group by categories; however, the categories are not intended to suggest a chronology.

Observation Task ____
Date completed ____

Physical Characteristics of the School and School Personnel

What is the layout of the school? Locate key areas such as the library, media center, faculty or department offices, teachers' rooms and other areas of the school.

Note where students congregate inside and outside of the school building.

Identify the names, roles, and locations of office staff, custodial staff, administrators, and all support staff.

Interview: (with other student teachers at your site)

- School psychologist and/or school nurse
- Special program coordinator/Special Education teachers
- Police liaison officer
- Other specialists

What are your impressions of the facility and school personnel?

School and Community

Walk through the school neighborhood at three different times of day. Who do you see? What are they doing? What inferences do you make?

Identify relevant community service agencies and groups that provide services to the school community.

Contact a community service agency and arrange to interview a staff member regarding the agency's involvement with children and their families.

Arrange to attend (if possible)

- A school board meeting
- A parent/teacher association meeting.
- Meetings of school site committee

What after school activities are available for students and who sponsors them?

If you were a new student or parent to the school, how easily available is information regarding community services and community activities?

Culture of the School

What are the most obvious manifestations of culture that you observe when you first walk into the school? (Name of school, language(s) of signs, language/appearance of people in office, bulletin boards, pictures, decorations, etc.)

How do you think you would feel entering the school if you were a parent or a child of color? Of a poor family? Non-English speaking? Special needs?

Observe student and teacher behavior before and after school, at break/recess, lunch.

Arrange with your supervising teacher to do a shadow study of a student. * (Multicultural Ed.)

Observe attire and nonverbal behavior/ communication of students and teachers.

Identify other evidence of a school culture.

Compare the culture of your school site with that of other schools with which you are familiar.

Policies and Procedures

Familiarize yourself with appropriate school procedures to follow if you are absent from your placement due to illness.

Review faculty and student handbooks and discuss them with your supervising teacher(s).

Examine the school improvement plan.

Become familiar with school procedures dealing with:

- Substance abuse, Medical emergency
- AIDS/STDs, Fire drills, Suspected child abuse, Lock down procedures, Sensitive subject matter, Students flagged for confidentiality, Sex education, Other emergencies

Review all school rules that you will be expected to enforce as a classroom (student) teacher and discuss these with your supervising teacher.

With the other student teachers at your site, make an appointment with the appropriate administrator in charge of discipline and identify school guidelines in handling discipline problems.

With other student teachers at your site interview the school counselor or appropriate administrator to learn the policies and procedures for referring a student to a counselor.

What questions do you have about school policies and procedures?

Working With Family Members (Issues, *Ed Psych)*

Are there written policies that address family participation in the school?

If there are get a copy and become familiar with them.

How does you supervising teacher communicate with family members?

Look at copies of written communication.

Arrange to sit in on a parent conference (if possible).

Which of the following are available for family members?

- Meeting rooms for family members?
- Resources on parenting?
- Directories of community resources for families?

Are staff and/or faculty member assigned as a family/community liaison(s)?

Are there organized opportunities for family members to volunteer at school in a meaningful way?

What other indications exist to conclude that family members are welcome or not welcome in the school?

Extra Curricular Activities and Teacher Assignments

Join your supervising teacher during assigned supervision at lunch, break, bus duty, assembly, school dance, game, or other event.

What after school activities are available for students and who sponsors them?

Attend an after school event.

- How many teachers are there?
- Administrators?
- How many students?
- Parents?
- How does the behavior of the students compare with their classroom behavior?
- What event did you attend and what did you learn?

Instructional Resources

Introduce yourself to the librarian, media personnel

Explore the school library and media center. Evaluate holdings in your subject area(s)/grade levels and familiarize yourself with procedures to make use of the materials.

Conduct a survey of computer use in the school.

- How are computers used? By teachers? By students?
- Are the computers school owned? Teacher owned? Which classrooms have computers? How many?

Arrange to visit the resource center at the district office and familiarize yourself with its services.

Familiarize yourself with the services offered by the local ESD.

Review films, tapes, and other materials available to you and familiarize yourself with ordering procedures from various sources.

What are your impressions of the adequacy of instructional resources?

Meeting the Needs of Early Adolescents/Classroom Observation

Observe a minimum of two teachers outside your subject matter area or grade level.

Note how subject matter and grade level impact teacher styles, strategies, and learning activities.

Find out how time is organized for instruction (Blocks, 45 min. class sessions, AB Block, 4 × 4 Block, flexible scheduling, etc.)

Is there a well developed advisory program with a curriculum? (* Issues)

Do teachers team and have common planning times? (* Issues)

Are there school wide programs that promote health, wellness, and safety?

Identify how instruction is designed to meet early adolescent developmental needs. (* Ed. Psych, *Planning & Implementation)

Request permission (arrange through your supervising teacher) to observe each of the following types of classrooms: (as available)

- English as a Second Language, Limited English Proficiency
- Bilingual
- Gifted and Talented
- Special Education, Other special programs or classes

Identify at least three teachers who use various instructional strategies such as cooperative learning, writers workshop, simulations, etc. and arrange observations through your supervising teacher.

Reflect on the strategies/activities observed that address the needs of early adolescents. What "best practices" did you observe?

Classroom Participation: Fall Practicum

Ask your supervising teacher to assign you responsibility for some classrooms tasks. (i.e. taking attendance, correcting papers, assisting individual students)

Ask your supervising teacher to assign you responsibility for preparing instructional materials, searching out resources in the library and working with the media specialist, checking out materials for classroom use and unit preparation.

With your supervising teacher's direction, increase your interaction with students.

Assist in class activities.

Help individual students during class, before/after school.

Work with small groups of students.

Correct quizzes or tests

With your supervising teacher's guidance give a minimum of three class presentations.

With your supervising teacher's guidance prepare and present a lesson or segment of a lesson for the whole class.

Prepare, administer and analyze at least one assessment.

Based on your experiences so far describe your strengths as a teacher and what aspects of teaching are the most challenging for you.

Preparation for Spring Student Teaching

Talk with a teacher or department head and find out how long term course or unit planning is done and how these plans are tied to course outlines and/or curriculum guides/frameworks.

Examine grade books and computer grading programs. Identify a number of methods for computing grades and reporting progress to students and parents.

Identify types of tests and specific tests, (standardized and teacher made) used in your school, in your classroom.

Ask your supervising teacher for ground rules in handling sensitive topics in the classroom.

Familiarize yourself with all school forms and record keeping that you will be responsible for as a (student) teacher.

Review appropriate records of students in your class(es).

Become familiar with the school calendar. Develop a long-range plan for your student teaching semester. Identify units, benchmarks to be addressed, and important dates such as those for state testing, conferences, and grading days.

Getting Ready To Teach

Prepare a draft or letter to the parents/guardians of all of your students. Introduce yourself and say something about your plans and/or goals for the semester. Discuss the draft with your supervising teacher and guide group advisor. Be sure to get administrative approval before sending the letter.

Review your management plan with your supervising teacher.

Establish detailed procedures for the first few weeks of the student teaching semester with your supervising teacher and university supervisor.

Establish regular due dates for long and short term planning and record them on your planning calendar.

Establish a mutually agreed upon place and time for weekly conferences with your supervising teacher. You will meet weekly (at a minimum) with your supervising teacher during your student teaching semester to review your lesson plans for the following week and discuss issues.

Discuss your work sample with your supervising teacher.

Identify three specific goals for student teaching. Discuss why they are important and make a plan to achieve each goal.

CHAPTER 21

TURNING POINTS

Some Questions to Ask

Sally N. Clark and Donald Clark
University of Arizona

To compensate for the continuing and historic lack of specific preparation and experience for teaching and leading at the middle level (Cooney, 2000; McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 1996; Scales, 1992; Scales & McEwin, 1994; Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Petzko, 2002), comprehensive professional development which is embedded in the day-to-day activities of the school must become a reality (Sparks, 1997). Using the recommendations of *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989), we developed and modified over the years, "*Turning Points*: Some Questions to Ask," (Clark & Clark, 1992, 1994, 2002) and have used it successfully in many middle level schools as a vehicle for learning about the recommendations of *Turning Points,* to guide schoolwide reform efforts, and to evaluate the effectiveness of current programs.

More than a decade later, with the continuing influx of teachers and principals with little formal background in middle level education, *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989) still provides fundamental and practical information, in an easy-to-use format, about the nature of appropriate structures and practices for the education of young adolescents. "*Turning Points*: Some Questions to Ask," when combined with the study of the revised compo-

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nents and new research presented in *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), has a real potential to increase the knowledge base of teachers and principals.

There are multiple ways in which "*Turning Points:* Some Questions to Ask," can be used. Some suggestions are: ***Embedded Professional Development about Middle Level Programs and Practices.*** Assisting new teachers and administrators in becoming informed middle level school practitioners is essential to developing, implementing, and maintaining developmentally responsive programs. The questions provide an effective way for teachers and administrators to acquire an in-depth knowledge of *Turning Points*, one of the premier statements of middle grades policy and practice, and to become involved in studying about and applying appropriate middle level practices in their schools.

School Self Study and Reflection. "*Turning Points:* Some Questions to Ask" provides a comprehensive guide for school self study. By addressing each of the questions, teachers and administrators can assess their school programs and practices and build a basis for school improvement and reform.

Facilitate a Transition to Turning Points 2000. With a basic knowledge of the eight recommendations of *Turning Points* and their implications for practice, teachers and administrators have a foundation on which to incorporate the new information presented in *Turning Points 2000*. In conjunction with "*Turning Points:* Some Questions to Ask," the following questions can be used to build awareness and to focus discussions on school improvement, standards-based reform, and student learning.

How have the original recommendations of *Turning Points* been changed or modified? Why do you think these changes or modifications were made?

What new information and research is reported that would support middle school improvement, classroom instruction, and student learning?

How can we take this new information from *Turning Points 2000* and apply it to our school?

APPENDIX
TURNING POINTS: SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK*

Carnegie Recommendation #1: Creating a Community for Learning

Questions:

How is our school a place where close, trusting relationships with adults and peers create a climate for personal growth and intellectual development?

How do we make our school a learning community where all students and adults are stimulated to learn?

What steps have we taken or could we take to create smaller learning environments?

How do we assure that every child in our school has at least one adult who will serve as an advocate and/or advisor?

Carnegie Recommendation #2: Teaching a Core of Common Knowledge

Questions:

In what ways are young adolescents in our school learning to think critically? How are they given opportunities to become actively involved in problem-solving activities?

In what ways is subject matter being integrated across the various subject disciplines?

How does the curriculum place emphasis on the development of healthful lifestyles?

What opportunities are provided for young adolescents to learn life skills through participation in school and community service?

Carnegie Recommendation #3: Ensuring Success for All Students

Questions:

In what ways do all young adolescents in our school have the opportunity to succeed in every aspect of the program regardless of previous achievement or the pace at which they learn?

Do we group students for instruction? If so, have we examined the consequences of grouping practices on adolescent learners? Have we examined ways in which instruction can be improved by the removal of tracking practices?

Are we currently using any form of flexible scheduling? If so, how?

What opportunities are there for students to learn at times other than the regularly scheduled class periods (before school, after school, at lunch)?

What opportunities are there for students to participate in a variety of school and community activities where they can experience success, self-worth, and recognition?

Carnegie Recommendation #4: Empowering Teachers and Administrators

Questions:

In what ways are decisions concerning the school experiences of our students being made by the teachers and administrators in our school?

In what ways are teachers given responsibility on what should be taught and how it should be taught?

In what ways do teachers and administrators participate regularly in the governance of the school?

How are teachers given opportunities to assume leadership positions with regard to teaching and learning?

Carnegie Recommendation #5: Preparing Teachers for the Middle Grades

Questions:

Are teachers in our school specially prepared to teach young adolescents?

Are teachers in our school required to have middle level certification? If not, do we have special criteria for selecting and hiring teachers who have received special preparation for teaching in middle level schools? If so, what is the nature of that preparation?

What provisions do we make to provide regular staff development for all persons in our school?

Carnegie Recommendation #6: Improving Academic Performance Through Better Health and Fitness

Questions:

In what ways does our school provide a climate that promotes healthy lifestyles for faculty, staff, and students?

How are all students given access to health services when needed?

How are good health practices promoted and modeled by faculty and staff?

How is our school emotionally and physically safe for both students and adults?

Carnegie Recommendation #7: Reengaging Families in the Education of Young Adolescents

Questions:

How are families and faculty members in our school allied through trust and respect in efforts to ensure that all young adolescents will succeed?

In what ways does our school regularly involve parents in meaningful roles in the governance of the school?

In what ways does our school work actively to inform parents of the progress of their children?

How does our school actively engage parents' help in the learning process? How are parents given assistance in how to help their children learn at home?

Carnegie Recommendation #8: Connecting Schools with Communities

Questions:

In what ways are community organizations working with us to share the responsibility for each young adolescent's success?

What opportunities are available for students to participate in community service?

How does our school serve as a clearinghouse for special community services needed by students?

How does our school work cooperatively with other community agencies to promote middle level education?

How does our school actively solicit support from community businesses, service clubs, and foundations in the provision of resources for students and teachers?

Source: Adapted from Clark, S., & Clark, D. (1992). Restructuring middle schools: Strategies for using *Turning Points.* In S. Clark & D. Clark (Eds.), *Schools in the middle: A decade of growth and change* (pp. 177–189). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals; Clark, S., & Clark, D. (1994). *Restructuring the middle level school: Implications for school leaders.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

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CHAPTER 22

USING STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS TO FACILITATE REFLECTION AND SYSTEMATIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Donald C. Clark and Sally Clark
University of Arizona

Effective, embedded professional development places teachers and site administrators at the center of the school improvement process. As active participants in school improvement, teachers and administrators are empowered to seek information and collect data and to reflect on the implications of that information and data. They are also empowered to plan and make decisions that best serve them in creating appropriate and effective learning environments, while at the same time providing a continuing process for improving their schools (Clark & Clark, 1994). Particularly appropriate for embedded professional development are the concepts of reflective practice (Schon, 1983). It offers a process for regularly examining practices, generating feedback, and for pursuing strategies for improvement. In fact, environments that encourage reflective thinking offer settings where it is safe to examine practice critically and pursue opportunities offered by new instructional strategies (McLaughlin, 1991).

Leaders for a Movement, pages 409–414
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While the benefits of reflective practice for leaders and teachers are well known, finding the time for and appropriate vehicles to stimulate reflection have been problematical. Over the past decade we have found the use of structured interviews to be quite useful in engaging principals and teachers in individual and group reflection. The two structured interview documents we use are revised and restructured versions of questionnaires first developed to gather data for the site visits of Phase II of the NASSP National Study of Leadership in Middle Level Education (Keefe, Valentine, Clark, & Irvin, 1994), and were again modified for use in a comprehensive study of middle level schools in Minneapolis (Clark & Clark, 1998, 2003). We have used these instruments on numerous occasions and have found them to be very effective vehicles for focusing individual and group reflection, reflection that often leads to significant school improvement.

Suggestions for Use

Reflection: Principals

- Individual—Principal fills out questionnaire; reviews answers and reflects on what she or he needs to do to provide leadership for school improvement.
- Group—Two or three principals interview each other and record answers. Together they discuss their answers and reflect about what actions they need to take individually and collectively to improve the learning environments in their schools.

Reflection: Teachers

- Individual—Teacher fills out questionnaire; reviews answers and reflects on what she or he needs to do to improve the curriculum and instruction in the school and in his or her classroom.
- Group—Two or three teachers or members of a teaching team interview each other and record answers. Together they discuss their answers and reflect about the implications of those answers for school and classroom improvement.

Data Gathering for School Improvement

- Teachers and school leaders interview each other and record the information
- Study groups comprising all teachers and administrators analyze the data for

- Agreements/Differences
- Strengths/Weaknesses
- Study groups look at implications of the findings and devise a plan for school improvement (e.g., Clark & Clark, 1994, *Restructuring the Middle Level School: Implications for School Leaders*, Chapter 9).

Involving Parents and Community

In conjunction with a shadow study, these instruments can serve as an excellent means for involving parents and community members in becoming better acquainted with their schools and more particularly the people who lead and teach in them (e.g., see Clark & Clark, 2003). Involving parents and community members allows them to become partners in school improvement through their involvement as participants in the data gathering process (e.g., using the structured interviews to interview principals and teachers), serving on planning committees, and participating in decision making.

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PRINCIPAL—STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. What is the current vision for this school?
   How did the school arrive at this vision?
2. In what ways are teachers, parents, and community members involved in school decision making?
   What have been the most important decisions this school has made during this school year?
3. What elements of middle grades philosophy do you believe are current strengths of your school?
   What do you feel this school needs to do next to continue moving forward?
4. To what extent do you feel that students feel both physically and emotionally safe in this school?
   What steps do you take to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for the students in this school?
5. What particular challenges do you face in meeting the needs of middle level students in this building?
   What specific help do you need from the District to move forward in meeting the needs of middle level students in this school?
6. In what ways does this school address the diverse needs of its middle level students?
   What are your greatest challenges in doing so?
7. How far along is your school in implementing content and performance standards for middle grades students?
8. How do you communicate curricular and behavior expectations to parents or guardians?
   What have been some of the most successful strategies you have found for involving the families of middle level students in the life of the school and the education of their children?
9. To what extent are the teachers in your school specifically prepared to teach young adolescents?
   What kinds of professional development activities are available to your teachers?
   Who decides what these activities will be and who is involved in planning and delivering them?
10. What are the most important professional development activities you believe your staff needs to meet the needs of young adolescents?
    To improve student achievement?
11. What types of special preparation do you have to work with young adolescents?

What kinds of professional development would most assist you in advancing middle level reforms in this school?
In improving student achievement?

TEACHER—STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. What is the current vision for this school?
   How did this school arrive at this vision?
2. In what ways are you involved in school decision making?
   In what ways are parents and community members involved in school decision making?
   What have been the most important decisions this school has made during this school year?
3. What elements of middle grades philosophy do you believe are current strengths of your school?
   What do you feel this school needs to do next to continue moving forward?
4. To what extent do you feel that students feel both physically and emotionally safe in this school?
   What steps do you take to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for the students in your classes?
5. What particular challenges do you face in meeting the needs of middle level students in this building?
6. In what ways do you address the diverse needs of the students in your classes?
   What are your greatest challenges in doing so?
7. How far along is your school in implementing content and performance standards for middle grades students?
8. How do you communicate curricular and behavior expectations to your students?
   How do you communicate curricular and behavior expectations to parents or guardians?
9. What have been some of the most successful strategies you have found for involving the families of middle level students in the life of the school and the education of their children?
10. How often do you assign homework? And how much per week?
    What kind of feedback do you give on homework assignments?
11. What special preparation do you have to teach young adolescents?
    What kinds of professional development activities are available to you and your colleagues?

Who decides what these activities will be and who is involved in planning and delivering them?

12. What are the most important professional development activities you believe would assist you in meeting the needs of the young adolescents in your school?
To improve student achievement?

CHAPTER 23

EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S MIDDLE GRADES METHODS

Dorie Combs, Melinda Wilder, Keith Kull, Sara Moore, Faye Newsome, Rodney White, and John Brown
Eastern Kentucky University

As a part of Eastern Kentucky University's (EKU) middle level program, students are required to complete a professional education semester preceding student teaching. This semester consists of a block of four courses taught by a team of middle level teacher educators. The courses include middle grades curriculum (EMG 430), reading in the content area (EMG 447) and two special methods classes corresponding to their content emphases (English/communications, mathematics, science, or social studies). The block schedule and team teaching arrangement is designed to model middle level best practices (Combs, Reehm, White, & Wilder, 2000; Combs & Wilder, 1999; McDaniel, Stowell, Rios, & Christopher, 1994).

EKU is a regional state supported institution situated in rural south central Kentucky. Approximately 45–50 students per year graduate from our middle grades undergraduate program. Many of these students are considered non-traditional in that they are older, have families, hold jobs and commute up to 100 miles to attend classes on campus.

Resources included are the *Middle Grades Methods Block Schedule, Structured Field Experience Requirements, Independent Field Experience Requirements,*

Leaders for a Movement, pages 415–430
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and *Middle Grades Methods Portfolio Scoring Guide.* The schedule allows for a variety of organizational patterns and flexible use of time; for example, students and faculty meet as a whole group for introductory meeting, informational sessions, and field trips (urban school visits, environmental education workshops, etc.). All students enroll in the content reading and curriculum classes. These classes typically have a large block of time and are team taught. The curriculum class often works in interdisciplinary teams while groups in the reading class are content based. These two classes are completed before the end of the semester to permit students to apply this information during field experiences and better balance the student workload. Special methods classes are scheduled in smaller time blocks on a more frequent basis throughout the semester.

Field experiences are structured to place students in five area schools for the entire school day for at least seven days. As much as possible, they are placed as interdisciplinary teams. Each school is assigned a university faculty member who serves as those students' class advisor and field experience supervisor. Students complete electronic journal entries that are e-mailed to their school supervisor following each school visit. These journal entries follow the format outlined in the *Structured Field Experience Requirements* document and target *Kentucky's New Teacher Standards* (NTS) (KY Education Professional Standards Board, 1999).

Students must also participate in additional independent field experiences such as attending state professional conferences, professional development workshops, museum visits, tutoring and attendance at various school events. These experiences must address each of their four classes in the block. A reflection is written to accompany the documentation, and these are included in their professional portfolio.

As a requirement for admission to student teaching, all EKU teacher education students are required to submit a professional portfolio based on the nine *New Teacher Standards* (KY Education Professional Standards Board, 1999). As the scoring guide indicates, in addition to introductory entries, students must provide evidence of and justification that they meet each Standard.

These documents form the foundation of the professional semester block. For more information contact Dorie Combs at dorie.combs@eku.edu or Melinda Wilder at melinda.wilder@eku.edu.

MIDDLE GRADES METHODS BLOCK SCHEDULE

Eastern Kentucky University
Middle Grades Methods Schedule, Fall, 2002

Course Number	*Title*	*Instructors*
EMG 430	Middle Grades Curriculum	Dr. Sara Moore and Dr. Melinda Wilder
EMG 447	Teaching Reading in the Content Areas	Dr. Faye Newsome and Dr. Dorie Combs
EMG 491	Teaching Math in the Middle Grades	Dr. Keith Kull
EMG 492	Teaching Science in the Middle Grades	Dr. Melinda Wilder
EMG 493	Teaching Social Studies in the Middle Grades	Dr. Rodney White
EMG 494	Teaching English/Communications in the Middle Grades	Dr. Dorie Combs

	430 Schedule *Language Arts & Science Methods*	*447 Schedule* *Social Studies & Math Methods*
8:00–9:40	492 Science Methods	493 Social Studies Methods
9:50–11:30	494 Language Arts Methods	491 Math Methods
11:30–12:20	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
12:20–2:15	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	447 Reading in the Content Areas

Date	*Class*	*Assignment*
Monday 8/19/02	All Classes meet for Block Orientation	Meet in Combs 427 8:00–2:15 • Team Teaching Concept • Schedule • Course Requirements / Grades • Field Experiences • Using Blackboard • KY's Curriculum • PRAXIS • Teacher Education Portfolio Preparation
Wednesday 8/21/02	492 Science Methods	• What is Science?
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Goals for Language Literacy for Adolescents
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• The Middle School Model

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Date	*Class*	*Assignment*
Friday 8/23/02	493 Social Studies Methods	• Concept Development and Writing for Understanding
	491 Math Methods	• Professional Experiences, NCTM, Goals & Expectations
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Content Literacy & Introduction to the Reading Process
Monday 8/26/02	492 Science Methods	• Science Standards
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Characteristics of Effective Language Arts Instruction in the Middle Grades
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Adolescent Development
Wednesday 8/28/02	493 Social Studies Methods	• Concept Development & Concept Attainment
	491 Math Methods	• Trends and Standards in Math Education
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Language, Diversity, & Culture
Friday 8/30/02	492 Science Methods	• How Students Learn Science
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Classroom Organization; Motivation to Read; Gender Differences
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Brain-Based Teaching
Monday 9/2/02	*Labor Day—No Classes*	
Wednesday 9/4/02	493 Social Studies Methods	• What is . . . are . . . Social Studies?
	491 Math Methods	• "A Vision for School Mathematics" & "The Equity Principle"
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Creating a Learning Climate
Friday 9/6/02	492 Science Methods	• Misconceptions
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Reading & Understanding Literature; Developing Independent Reading Habits; Literature Circles
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Lesson and Unit Planning

Date	*Class*	*Assignment*
Monday 9/9/02	**493 Social Studies Methods**	• **Skill Instruction**
	491 Math Methods	• **Constructivism and Behaviorism in Math Teaching**
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• **Planning for Content Literacy—Meet in the Learning Resources Center**
Wednesday 9/11/02	**492 Science Methods**	• **Misconceptions**
	494 Language Arts Methods	• **Reading, Understanding, & Performing Poetry**
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• **Individual Differences**
Friday 9/13/02	**493 Social Studies Methods**	• **Teaching for Conceptual Understanding**
	491 Math Methods	• **What is Mathematics?**
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• **Assessing and Building Prior Knowledge**
Monday 9/16/02	***KMSA in Lexington at the Embassy Suites Hotel***	
Wednesday 9/18/02	**492 Science Methods**	• **Discrepant Events**
	494 Language Arts Methods	• **Reading Persuasive, Informational, and Practical and Workplace Text**
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• **Differentiation**
Friday 9/20/02	**493 Social Studies Methods**	• **History Alive!**
	491 Math Methods	• **"Representations" and "The Algebraic Principles"**
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• **Assessing Students—meet at Model Lab School**
		KY Reading Association Conference
Monday 9/23/02	**492 Science Methods**	• **Guided Inquiry Learning**
	494 Language Arts Methods	• **Integrating Media Literacy and Utilizing Films Appropriately**
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• **Cooperative Learning**
Wednesday 9/25/02	**Fields in Lexington**	**Groups will be assigned to shadow students at Winburn and Bryan Station Middle Schools**

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Date	*Class*	*Assignment*
Friday 9/27/02	493 Social Studies Methods	No Social Studies—Math meets double time
	491 Math Methods	• Problem Solving in the Curriculum and the Classroom
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Assessing Students and Materials
Monday 9/30/02	492 Science Methods	• Challenge Inquiry Learning & Units of Study
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Instruction that Promotes Growth in Writing & Managing a Writing Workshop
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Interdisciplinary Teaming
Wednesday 10/2/02	491 Math Methods	No Math Methods—Social Studies meets double time
	493 Social Studies Methods	• Creating Affect . . . for Effective Learning
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Midterm / then work in LRC
Friday 10/4/02	492 Science Methods	• Midterm
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Responding to Students' Writing
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Midterm
Monday 10/7/02	493 Social Studies Methods	• Midterm
	491 Math Methods	• "Standards for Teaching Mathematics"
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Parent–Community Involvement
Wednesday 10/09/02	Maywoods	*Interdisciplinary Field Trip to the EKU Environmental Education Center*
Friday 10/11/02	492 Science Methods	• Open Inquiry
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Improving Students' Use of Language & Standard Grammar
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Reading to Learn
		NCTM Conference *Last Day to Withdraw!*
Monday 10/14/02	*Columbus Day! Holiday!*	

Date	*Class*	*Assignment*
Wednesday 10/16/02	493 Social Studies Methods	• Project-Based Learning & Culminating Projects
	491 Math Methods	• Interdisciplinary Mathematics/Social Studies Lesson
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Teaching Content Specific Vocabulary & Increasing Conceptual Growth
Friday 10/18/02	492 Science Methods	• Learning Cycle
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Providing Instruction in Reading Persuasive, Informational, and Practical and Workplace Text in Language Arts
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Classroom Management
Monday 10/21/02	493 Social Studies Methods	• Culminating Projects and Scoring Guides
	491 Math Methods	• Assessment & Alternative Levels of Questioning
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Strategies for Learning and Remembering Information
Wednesday 10/23/02	492 Science Methods	• Learning Cycle
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Developing an Integrated Language Arts Unit
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Classroom Management
Friday 10/25/02	493 Social Studies Methods	• Project-Based Learning—Learning Activity Lists
	491 Math Methods	• Creating a Context for the Teaching/Learning of Mathematics
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Responding to Reading & Writing Across the Curriculum
		NSTA Regional Conference
Monday 10/28/02	492 Science Methods	• Inquiry-Based Curricula
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Scoring the KY Writing Portfolio
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Advisory/Exploratory/Extracurricular

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Date	*Class*	*Assignment*
Wednesday 10/30/02	493 Social Studies Methods	• Project-Based Learning/Culminating Projects
	491 Math Methods	• Technology, Calculator Usage, Developing a Calculator Philosophy
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Writing in the Content Areas
Friday 11/1/02	491 Math Methods	• Rational Numbers and Fraction Bars
	493 Social Studies Methods	• Project-Based Learning/Culminating Projects
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Assessing Middle level readers
		NMSA in Portland, OR
Monday 11/4/02	492 Science Methods	• Science Process Skills
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Assessment & Grading in Language Arts
	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Field Experience Overview (all students need to be here!)
Wednesday 11/6/02	Fields	
Friday 11/8/02	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• Portfolio Preparation
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Inquiry Using Technology
	491 Math Methods	• Tangrams and Their Applications
	492 Science Methods	• Teaching "Real-Live" Middle Schoolers
	493 Social Studies Methods	• Socratic Seminar
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners in Middle Grades Language Arts
Monday 11/11/02	Fields	
Wednesday 11/13/02	Fields	
Friday 11/15/02	Fields	
Monday 11/18/02	Fields	
Wednesday 11/20/02	Fields	

Date	*Class*	*Assignment*
Friday 11/22/02	Fields	
Monday 11/25/02	430 Middle Grades Curriculum	• *Portfolios Due Today!*
	447 Reading in the Content Areas	• Final Exam
	491 Math Methods	• Teaching skills and concepts
	492 Science Methods	• Inquiry Using Technology
	493 Social Studies Methods	• Socratic Seminar
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Teaching Oral Language and Dramatics
Wednesday 11/27/02	*Thanksgiving Break Begins!*	
Monday 12/2/02	491 Math Methods	• Rational Numbers and Cuisenaire Rods
	492 Science Methods	• Managing an Inquiry-Based Classroom
	493 Social Studies Methods	• Socratic Seminar
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Promoting Student Inquiry and Research
Wednesday 12/4/02	491 Math Methods	• Rational Numbers and Pattern Blocks
	492 Science Methods	• Assessment in Science
	493 Social Studies Methods	• Socratic Seminar
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Censorship and Challenges to Literature. *Interdisciplinary Units Due!*
Friday 12/6/02	491 Math Methods	• Course Wrap-up Review & Evaluation
	492 Science Methods	• Assessment in Science
	493 Social Studies Methods	• Course Wrap-up and Review for Exam
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Sharing of Language Arts Units of Study
Monday 12/9/02 8:00/10:30	492 Science Methods	• Final Exam 8:00
	494 Language Arts Methods	• Final Exam 10:30
Wednesday 12/11/01 8:00/10:30	491 Math Methods	• Final Exam 8:00
	493 Social Studies Methods	• Final Exam 10:30

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STRUCTURED FIELD EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

1. Students will report to their assigned school on seven days in November. Participation times are from 8:00 a.m.–3:15 p.m. You should spend approximately one half of each day with each of your assigned teachers. (Students who have classes that overlap these times are expected to make up the hours at a time convenient to your cooperating teachers). You are required to complete a total of 49 hours in your assigned school. Absences, tardies, and early dismissals must be made up! We will also spend one day in Lexington visiting middle schools with more multicultural populations. More information will be provided regarding that in class.
2. Field Experience Dates

September 25—trip to Lexington	November 15
November 6	November 18
November 11	November 20
November 13	November 22

3. Comply with the school's dress code. This will be found in your copy of the school's handbook. Wear your name tag on each visit. Sign in with the school office when you arrive.
4. Students are responsible for delivering the Teacher Evaluation forms to your cooperating teachers on your first visit and returning them to your supervisor/advisor after your last field experience date.
5. After each participation date, an electronic journal entry will be submitted to your school site supervisor. The journal entries will be guided by the following focus questions:
   (a) Summarize the activities and teacher tasks you performed today. (Refer to list below for examples)
   (b) What specific content was addressed in the lessons that you saw today (refer to Core Content/Program of Studies)? Is this content of which you are already knowledgeable or would it require additional study on your part? NTS 8
   (c) What classroom management techniques did you observe? NTS 2 How were special needs/individual differences addressed? NTS 2, 3, 4
   (d) What instructional methods /strategies did you observe? NTS 3
   (e) What did you learn from your experience today that will help you become an effective teacher? NTS 5

(f) Specific questions for each week:

Nov 4: Briefly describe the population of your assigned school. Describe you observations of middle level students. Relate your observations to characteristics of young adolescent cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development that you have studied and discussed in current or previous classes. Be specific about the ages/ grades of students you observe.

Nov 11: Describe how this school and your specific "team" addresses the components of the middle school model. You may need to ask some questions of various staff members to answer this question.

Nov 13: What technology resources are available at your assigned school? How are some ways that your school and cooperating teachers integrate technology in instruction?

Nov 15: How do your cooperating teachers integrate reading and writing instruction in their content areas? Describe strategies they use to teach content area reading/writing? Include one or two examples of assignments they use and state if these are contributed to the writing portfolio. (Language Arts majors should focus on the content other than language arts to answer this question).

Nov 18: Describe the types of assessments your cooperating teachers use (formal and informal)? Describe your cooperating teachers' beliefs and philosophies regarding the appropriate assessment for middle level students in their content areas. Here again, you may need to ask some questions, as it is unlikely that you will observe much formal assessment.

Nov 20: How do your cooperating teachers deal with special academic needs within their classes? Address various instructional needs, including needs of students identified as gifted in one or more areas and learning or behavior disabilities. Describe the resources and support provided for your cooperating teachers.

Nov 22: Summarize the three most important things that you have learned from your field experiences. What areas do you feel you still need to learn about? Do you believe you are ready for student teaching? Explain.

6. Each student should teach an entire lesson/period twice, once in each content area. Both teaching episodes will be videotaped. The videotape will be evaluated by your special methods instructor. Remember, videotape permission forms must be filed by all students appearing in the video. Check with your teacher to make certain that this has already been handled.
7. Each EMG 447 student will also plan and teach a reading lesson in one of your content areas per the requirements of your instructors. This lesson does not have to be videotaped.
8. Students should assist their cooperating teacher as assigned in a variety of duties such as:
    - Creating instructional materials Preparing bulletin boards
    - Evaluating student work
    - Working with small groups
    - Working with individuals
    - Assisting with supervision—hall, bathroom, cafeteria, etc.
    - Record keeping such as attendance
9. Critical areas to consider
    - Be punctual
    - Be professional and ethical
      Plan carefully
    - Be cooperative with team members and the cooperating teacher
    - Dress professionally, yet comfortably
    - Communicate clearly with your cooperating teacher
    - Use positive verbal and nonverbal skills
    - Leave materials developed with school supplies at the school.
    - Demonstrate confidentiality regarding students, teachers, and your peers.

INDEPENDENT FIELD EXPERIENCES

Students enrolled in the Middle Grades Methods Block must attend at least four different activities from those listed below for a minimum total of 8 hours (two hours per course in which you are enrolled). These experiences *do not* have to take place in the same school as your structured field experiences. Independent field experiences are a requirement of the teacher education program and KY teacher certification. *You may not complete these courses without evidence of completion of these hours.*

Professional Meetings

- Professional conference (e.g., KSTA, KMSA, NMSA, KCTM, KRA, etc.)
- Professional meeting (e.g., student KEA or EKU-MSA, SEC, Kappa Delta Pi)
- School or district inservice (check with the Principal to make sure you may attend)

School Based Activities

- Middle School Interdisciplinary Team meeting
- Middle School Faculty meeting
- Middle School Site based council meeting
- Extracurricular program (e.g., tutoring, concerts, chaperone a school dance, assist on a field trip, etc.)

Content Specific Activities

- Other experiences identified by the specific course instructor:
  - Activity file
  - Content related field trip (i.e., civil war reenactment, geological exploration)
  - Play, performance or poetry reading
  - Content related museum

Word process and include the following under NTS VI (Professional Development) in your Professional Portfolio. These will be reviewed as part of the Portfolio review process:

1. Heading: Middle Grades Methods Independent Field Experiences and *your name*
2. The title of the experience and the class to which it applies
3. The location
4. The date, start and end times with the *total number of hours* of the activity
5. The person in charge and a phone number or e-mail address
6. A summary of the activity
7. A reflection indicating what you learned and how that will help you become a better middle grades educator
8. Proof of participation in the form of a certificate, handout, photos, signature of the person in charge, etc.

Portfolio Review Scoring Guide—Fall 2002

NTS Standard	*Standard Met with Excellence (5 pts.)*	*Standard Met (3 pts.)*	*Standard Not Met (1 pts.)*
Introductory Materials: Title Page Table of Contents Résumé Philosophy Letter to Reviewer Cross Reference Chart	Components all present including a revised philosophy that reflects middle level education Quality is excellent with few to no surface feature errors that do not interfere with understanding Graded copy included No grade less than a B	Components all present including a revised philosophy that reflects middle level education Quality is good with few surface features errors that do not interfere with understanding Graded copy included No grade less than a C	Not all components present and/or the philosophy is not revise Quality is poor and surface feature errors interfere with understanding Not all graded copies included No grade less than a C
Standard I: Designs and Plans Instruction	Two appropriate entries included Quality is excellent with few to no surface features errors that do not interfere with understanding Graded copy included No grade less than a B Reflection is in-depth and thoughtful	1 or 2 somewhat appropriate entries included Quality is good with few surface features errors that do not interfere with understanding Graded copy included No grade less than a C Reflection is appropriate	1 or 2 entries included and/or quality and/or appropriateness is poor with many surface features errors that interfere with understanding Graded copy not included No grade less than a C Reflection is poor
Standard II: Creates Learning Climates	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I
Standard III: Implements Instruction	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I
Standard IV: Assessment	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I

Portfolio Review Scoring Guide—Fall 2002 (Cont.)

NTS Standard	*Standard Met with Excellence* *(5 pts.)*	*Standard Met* *(3 pts.)*	*Standard Not Met* *(1 pts.)*
Standard V: Reflects and Evaluates	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I
Standard VI: Collaborates with Others	Service Learning Project plus 1 other appropriate entry included	Service Learning Project plus 1 other somewhat appropriate entry included	Only Service Learning Project or 1 other entry included and/or
	Quality is excellent with few to no surface features errors that do not interfere with understanding	Quality is good with few surface features errors that do not interfere with understanding	quality and/or appropriateness is poor with many surface features errors that interfere with understanding
	Graded copy included	Graded copy included	Graded copy not included
	No grade less than a B	No grade less than a C	No grade less than a C
	Reflection is in-depth and thoughtful	Reflection is appropriate	Reflection is poor
Standard VII: Professional Development	Revised PDP included.	Revised PDP included.	Only revised PDP included
	Outside field hours (8) documented	Outside field hours (8) documented	outside field hours (8) documented and/or quality and/or appropriateness is poor with many surface features errors that interfere with understanding
	Quality is excellent with few to no surface features errors that do not interfere with understanding	Quality is good with few surface features errors that do not interfere with understanding	
	Graded copy included	Graded copy included	Graded copy not included
	No grade less than a B	No grade less than a C	No grade less than a C
	Reflection is in-depth and thoughtful	Reflection is appropriate	Reflection is poor
Standard VIII: Content Knowledge	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I
Standard IX: Technology	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I	Refer to Standard I

Reflections in the portfolio should address the rationale for the artifact's inclusion in the portfolio by discussing the following four questions:

1. Rationale/Context—*Why did I select this artifact?* What purpose and in what setting was the artifact created?
2. Theoretical Knowledge—*What does it show about my knowledge and skills in reference to specific New Teacher Standard performance indicators?*
3. Practical Knowledge—*What did I learn from the experience that resulted in this artifact?*
4. Professional Goals—*What do I still have to learn? What do you recognize that you still need to learn?*

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CHAPTER 24

MIDDLE GRADES MASTER TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Holly Thornton
University of North Carolina Greensboro

After two years of collaboratively building a PDS structure from the ground up, building coordinators, serving as lead teacher liaisons in each of six middle level PDS's, met with their university counterparts to develop a new process to evaluate master teachers. These teachers were selected to work with a cohort group of 15–20 pre-service apprentices during their full time, 15 week, culminating field experience, leading to full middle level certification. Prior to this, master teachers were selected using a traditional process, which relied heavily on nomination, by the building principal. Interested teachers completed an application, which included a statement of philosophy, and three recommendations/ratings completed by the principal, and two other professional references. These applications were then reviewed by university faculty, who decided which teachers to select, and then attained approval from the building principal.

The building coordinators decided at one of their bimonthly meetings, that some of the teachers who had been selected did not possess the pedagogical skills and mentoring abilities that were necessary to be effective master teachers. They met to develop a new process of selection that was grounded in National Board for Professional Teaching Early Adolescence

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Leaders for a Movement, pages 431–434
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Generalist standards, and involved a peer review process. Each master teacher, those currently in the pool and those who were applying for the first time, would engage in an observation and interview process. The observation tool was jointly developed by the building and university coordinators, and revised over the first three years of its use. An interview process, which would be lead by the university coordinator (faculty) focused on two qualities of a middle level master teacher, that of possessing dispositions which reflected middle school philosophy, and the experience and dispositions necessary to act as a coach and mentor.

After receiving the applications, building coordinators decided who would observe and evaluate each applicant, observing in a building other than their own. The two university faculty members set up interviews in each building. Both the observation and interview evaluation used a 1–4 scaled scoring agreed upon by the group. Once the evaluations were completed, the group met to discuss the results and compiled a list of applicants recommended to become master teachers. This list was then sent to each building principal for final approval. The coordinators group then contacted all applicants with the evaluation results. Those who were not selected received feedback on the areas where improvement was needed and were offered support and professional development over the next school year, should they decided to reapply. The selection process embodies several important aspects of the PDS. These include:

Teacher Empowerment via Ownership of the Selection Process

True collaboration between university and school base faculty

Grounding in teaching standards

Grounding in middle school philosophy

A commitment to involving and cultivating teachers whose practices are consistent with teacher preparation and the research base

Ongoing professional development and inquiry into best practices

The PDS middle level partners have successfully employed this evaluation process for 4 years.

Middle Grades Master Teacher Interview Guide

(Rate on 1–4 scale and write supporting comments)

Rating Scale

4 = exemplary level; 3 =proficient level; 2 = in progress level; 1 = unsatisfactory level

Name ____

School____

Concentrations___________________________ Grade _________

How do you plan and implement instruction to address adolescent needs/characteristics?

What instructional resources do you use?

What is the "ideal" learning environment in your classroom and what strategies do you employ to work toward that ideal?

How do you work toward meaningful learning with all students?

How do you address students' social needs within your instruction?

How do you assess student learning?

In what ways do you collaborate with families, communities, and colleagues?

What one thing would you change about middle school?

What skills or characteristics do you have that would serve you well in a mentoring/co-teaching role?

Why do you want to be a master teacher?

Middle Grades Master Teacher Observation

Teacher Name _______________________________________

Building ____

Grade level____

Subject areas _______________________________________

Based on the following descriptor, rate the Master Teacher applicant you have observed on a scale of 1–4. Please indicate N/A for those standards which you could not observe/determine.

NBPTS 1 knowledge of students: _______________

NBPTS 2 knowledge of subject matter: __________

NBPTS 3 instructional resources: _______________

NBPTS 4 learning environment:_________________

NBPTS 5 meaningful learning:__________________

NBPTS 6 multiple paths to learning: ____________

NBPTS 7 social development: ____________________
NBPTS 8 assessment: ____________________
NBPTS 9 reflective practice: ____________________
NBPTS 10 collaboration: ____________________

Observation Descriptors

Master Teacher Observation Reflection Sheet

Name____________________
School____________________
Grade level/subjects taught____________________

How would you evaluate the lesson you taught?

____

____

____

____

How did this lesson reflect a "typical" lesson with these students?

____

____

____

____

What changes would you make and why?

____

____

____

____

CHAPTER 25

TOMORROW'S TEACHERS TODAY

A Symposium on Middle Level Teacher Preparation: Summary Session—A Professional Development Technique

Mary Henton
National Middle School Association

National Middle School Association's Symposium on Middle Level Teacher Preparation is a biennial event that brings together approximately 175 middle level teacher education professionals for two days of sharing and learning. Like other symposia and conferences, informal opportunities to network and dialogue abound. Because creating a learning community is an important aspect of the Symposium, NMSA included Summary Sessions at its 2003 Symposium, February 7 and 8. Introduced to NMSA's professional development repertoire by Dr. Sue Carol Thompson, Summary Sessions facilitate collective, constructivist learning by tapping the strength of team learning to help individuals articulate the day's experiences, clarify points of learning, and develop further questions and plans for action.

Each day of the Symposium began with an opening morning session followed by a program of concurrent sessions. Each day concluded with a Summary Session, where participants gathered in the general session room

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for self-facilitated, structured dialogue regarding individual learning during the day. Chairs were arranged in circles of 6–8, and flip chart paper and markers completed the arrangement. Participants were encouraged to sit with people they did not know, but were welcome to gather with associates and friends. A member of the Symposium organizing committee explained the process and structure, then turned the time over to the groups to self-manage their time and work (see Day One—Compelling Questions; and Day Two—Powerful Learning).

Lively conversation, new questions, and possible solutions, quickly surfaced. People pulled chairs close together, leaned forward in attention, spoke to each other by name, and filled the flip charts. In some cases groups continued their dialogue after the session's official conclusion. While NMSA staff and Symposium committee members hoped for a high level of sharing and the emergence of learning community behaviors, they were surprised by two other outcomes. First, common themes emerged across the eight or ten Summary Session groups. These themes became apparent when NMSA staff transcribed each group's notes at the end of Day One's Summary Session. This consistency of themes was surprising because Symposium participants were a diverse group of professionals, including state level education officers, college deans, and professors from the entire range of colleges and universities—from large state universities to small liberal arts colleges. Some schools had well-established middle level teacher preparation programs, and others were struggling to develop their first courses.

The coalescing effect upon the group of the recognition of common themes, led to a second surprising, but beneficial outcome. One of the themes that emerged Day One was advocacy—the need for this group, as individuals and in teams, to communicate with local, state and federal legislators on behalf of quality middle level teacher preparation. Various aspects of the curriculum during Day One prompted individuals to consider this responsibility in a new light. When individuals began to share their personal insight during the Summary Session, they heard others in their small groups echo this realization. What had earlier seemed an individual awareness now surfaced as shared learning. This realization energized the group and filtered through the next day's sessions. Anecdotal evidence since the Symposium has indicated that various participants have taken action to develop their advocacy skills and request necessary resources.

Summary Sessions can be designed to focus the dialogue in any number of ways. It is critical, though, that the discussion groups self-manage their process, yet have parameters to guide their conversations. It is also important, as demonstrated during the 2003 Symposium, that Summary Session groups record their dialogue for review and posting on the Web for later reference.

Day One—Compelling Questions

The goals of the Summary Sessions are:

- to assist you in turning new ideas into reality when you return to your teaching institution
- to facilitate articulation of new knowledge from the conversations, sessions, information during the day
- to strengthen your professional network
- to provide feedback to how National Middle School Association (NMSA) and the Professional Preparation Committee can assist you in strengthening the field of middle level teacher preparation.

The following structure will be briefly discussed and clarified at the beginning of the session:

Pull chairs together in a circle to form a discussion group of 7–10 people. Join colleagues you know and work with, or gather with people you have not met.

Introduce yourself to each other. Time Limit: 10 minutes

Individually, write one Compelling Question that arose for you today and one Powerful Insight. Time Limit: 5 minutes

Using a round-robin strategy, share your Compelling Question and Powerful Insight. Time Limit: 10 minutes

Starting with Compelling Question #1, brainstorm ideas, responses, or strategies to assist in addressing this Question. Respond to each item, one by one. Be sure the recorder writes down group's ideas. Time Limit: 30 minutes

Review the Powerful Insights, and allow for open comment, reflection, and reaction. Record themes that emerge from this conversation. Time Limit: 15 minutes

Individually, identify a learning goal for tomorrow. In round-robin format, briefly share goals. Time Limit: 10 minutes

Conclude and check out with the group by offering any insights, comments, assistance. Time Limit: 5 minutes

Some guidelines to assist you:

- Ground Rules
- All ideas are valid
- Every voice is heard
- All information is written on flip charts

Self-Managed Groups

Each table will manage its own discussion, data, and time. Following are useful roles for self-managing this work. Divide up the work as you wish.

- Discussion Facilitator—Assures that each person who wants to speak is heard within time available. Keeps group on track to finish on time.
- Timekeeper—Keeps group aware of time left. Monitors speakers and signals time remaining.
- Recorder—Writes group's output on flip charts, using speaker's words. (Ask people to restate long ideas succinctly.) Also needs to label paper so that it is clear which activity it is.
- Data Manager—Sees that all flip charts are collected. Helps keep related information together. Turns in the flip chart papers at the end of the Summary Session.

Day Two—Powerful Learning

The goals of the Summary Sessions are:

- to assist you in turning new ideas into reality when you return to your teaching institution
- to facilitate articulation of new knowledge from conversations, sessions, information during the day
- to strengthen your professional network
- to provide feedback to how NMSA and the Professional Preparation Committee can assist you in strengthening the field of middle level teacher preparation.

The following structure will be briefly discussed and clarified at the beginning of the session:

Pull chairs together in a circle to form a discussion group of 7–10 people. Join colleagues you know and work with, or gather with people you have not met.

Introduce yourself to each other. Time Limit: 10 minutes

Individually, write one Powerful Learning that resonated with you during the Symposium. Time Limit: 5 minutes

Using a round-robin strategy, share these Powerful Learnings. Time Limit: 10 minutes

Starting with Powerful Learning #1, brainstorm ideas about ways to successfully implement this strategy or idea in your setting. Respond to each item, one by one. Be sure the recorder writes down group's ideas. Time Limit: 30 minutes

After sharing Powerful Learnings, brainstorm a list of challenges and issues facing middle level teacher preparation programs. Time Limit: 10 minutes

Look over the list of challenges and brainstorm ways to address those challenges and issues. Time Limit: 10 minutes

List ways that NMSA could help you, as teacher preparation professional, meet current and future needs in middle level teacher preparation. Time Limit: 10 minutes

Check out with the group by sharing one last thought related to the Symposium. Time Limit: 5 minutes

Some guidelines to assist you:

- Ground Rules
- All ideas are valid
- Every voice is heard
- All information is written on flip charts

Self-Managed Groups

Each table will manage its own discussion, data, and time. Following are useful roles for self-managing this work. Divide up the work as you wish.

- Discussion Facilitator—Assures that each person who wants to speak is heard within time available. Keeps group on track to finish on time.
- Timekeeper—Keeps group aware of time left. Monitors speakers and signals time remaining.
- Recorder—Writes group's output on flip charts, using speaker's words. (Ask people to restate long ideas succinctly.) Also needs to label paper so that it is clear which activity it is.
- Data Manager—Sees that all flip charts are collected. Helps keep related information together. Turns in the flip chart papers at the end of the Summary Session.

CHAPTER 26

MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHER EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Paul D. Deering and Barbara DeBaryshe
University of Hawai'i

The Middle Level Teacher Education Questionnaire (*TEQ*) is based on an earlier survey (Stephens, Zilliox, & Deering, 1998–1999). It is designed to assess participants' self-assessment of their proficiency at various components of educating early adolescents, plus their attitudes toward some of these constructs. In addition, the instrument elicits basic demographic data plus information regarding the level of prior and desired professional development of the participant.

The *TEQ* is administered confidentially pre- and post-program to participants in the Masters Degree in Secondary Education with a Middle Level Emphasis Program (MLMED) at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The MLMED began in June, 1996, in order to build a teacher/educator leadership cadre for middle level school renewal in the Hawai'i (Deering, Black, Pateman, Ashford, Kahiapo, & Apisa, 2003). The program was designed by a task force, involving persons from multiple departments of UHM, plus teachers and administrators from the HIDOE and the Kamehameha Schools (Deering & Port, 1995). To date, four two-year cohorts of approximately 33 persons each, mostly classroom teachers, have participated in the MLMED, with Cohort Four still in the program.

Hawai'i's tremendously diverse population, comprised of 18–22% each of persons of Native Hawaiian, Japanese, Filipino and European/Cauca-

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sian ancestry, along with Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Samoan, Tongan, Marshallese, Micronesian, African American, Native American, Latin American and other Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic/racial groups, contributes to a rich, multicultural society. This diversity also necessitates a more detailed list of ethnicities than might be required elsewhere. Quite simply, a category of "Asian/Pacific Islander" would be useless here, as it would encompass nearly 80% of our population.

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University of Hawai'i—Manoa: Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies

MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHER EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your responses will be kept confidential. If you do not wish to participate, simply turn in a blank survey.

Please respond to the following questions to aid with general research on education, and more specifically, on the UH-Manoa MEd in Secondary Education with a Middle Level Emphasis. Data will *not* be used to evaluate individuals.

It is unlikely that any middle level educator would realistically rank themselves highly on every item listed. Therefore, relax, answer the questions as accurately as you can, and don't worry about how others might rate themselves. Mahalo!

PART ONE
Background Information

Directions: Please write your response.

Have you taken this survey before? YES NO

1. Your age

2. Gender (Circle one) Female Male

3. Please indicate your ethnicity/ethnicities in rank order. Write 1 by the ethnicity with which you most closely identify, 2 next to the second most, and so on.

Chinese
Japanese
Other Asian
Hawaiian
African American
Latino/Latina

Filipino/Fililpina
Korean
Middle Eastern
Other Pacific Islander
Native American
Caucasian/European

4. Including this year, how many years you have taught?

5. Including this year, how many years you have taught *in the middle grades* (5th–9th)?

6. What grade(s) do you currently teach?

7. What subject area(s)/specialization do you currently teach?

What current teaching certification(s) do you hold (if any)?

8. Grade level(s)

9. Specialty/subject area(s)

10. State that granted your teaching certification

11. Which college/university degree(s) do you hold? (Mark all that apply)

Baccalaureate 5th year certificate (PD) Master's

12. How many college courses have you taken that were devoted mainly to *middle-level education?*

13. How workshops or other in-service activities have you taken/participated in that were devoted mainly to *middle-level education?*

PART TWO
Middle Level Education

Directions: Please assess your current level of knowledge and proficiency in middle level education. *Circle* your response using the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree

1.	I am excited to be a professional involved with early adolescent development and education.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #1a–c: Development

2.	I understand the physical characteristics and development of early adolescents. (For example, the variability and rates at which growth occurs, the development of secondary sex characteristics)	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	I understand the emotional characteristics and development of early adolescents. (For example, their primary identity issues)	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	I understand the intellectual characteristics and development of early adolescents. (For example, the variability and rates at which formal operations thinking occurs)	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	I understand current, research-based theories of learning. (For example, constructivism, information-processing, multiple intelligences)	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	I understand the social characteristics and development of early adolescents. (For example, the primary social development tasks and the contexts in which they are encountered)	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	I understand the major issues related to early adolescent health. (For example, risk behaviors; access to health care)	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	I understand the major issues related to family relations and adolescent development. (For example, the changing roles that early adolescents play in their families, challenges facing contemporary families)	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	I understand the role that peer groups play in early adolescent development. (For example, the pressures, growth opportunities, and self-definition that peer groups provide)	1	2	3	4	5	6

10.	I understand how schools as institutions affect early adolescent development. (For example, the ways that they shape students' perceptions of themselves and their peers)	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.	I understand how various non-school institutions affect early adolescent development. (For example, churches, clubs, sports programs, and community organizations)	1	2	3	4	5	6
12.	I understand how social and economic class can affect early adolescent development. (For example, by providing differential access to schooling and the workplace)	1	2	3	4	5	6
13.	I understand the magnitude and limitations of the media's effect on early adolescents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.	I understand how gender can affect early adolescent development. (For example, how different expectations among students, educators and parents, may be based on gender)	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.	I understand how culture and/or ethnicity can affect early adolescent development. (For example, how a student's culture/ethnicity can be a source of pride, shame, or conflict in the school and community)	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	I understand local social and health services available to early adolescents. (For example, teen hot lines, runaway shelters, medical clinics and family counseling services)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #1d: MS Structure/Overview

17.	I understand the political context of the middle level educational movement. (For example, how decisions are made about funding, policy and laws affecting early adolescents, and their schools and families)	1	2	3	4	5	6
18.	I understand the history of the middle level education movement. (For example, its roots in prior educational movements, its major developments throughout the twentieth century, and its ten-year history in Hawai'i)	1	2	3	4	5	6
19.	I understand the major national reports and publications regarding middle level education. (For example, those by the Carnegie Commission, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the National Middle School Association [NMSA])	1	2	3	4	5	6

20.	I can explain how the major components of middle level schools address the developmental needs of early adolescents. (For example, how advisory programs address social and emotional needs; how exploratory programs and integrated curriculum meet intellectual needs)	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.	I understand how flexible/block scheduling works, and how it can facilitate appropriate instruction for early adolescents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22.	I understand how interdisciplinary teams work in middle level schools.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23.	I am excited about teaching my academic field(s).	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #2: Subject Knowledge

24.	I have a current knowledge base in the academic field(s) which I teach.	1	2	3	4	5	6
(a)	I am well-versed in all aspects of the academic field(s) which I teach.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25.	I understand my academic field(s) well enough to effectively link it to other subjects. (For example, through interdisciplinary instruction)	1	2	3	4	5	6
26.	I am knowledgeable about recent developments in teaching my subject area. (For example, current approaches and major curriculum initiatives)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(a)	I am familiar with national standards and guidelines for teaching my subject area(s). (For example, National Council of Teachers of Math, English, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(b)	I am familiar with local or state standards and guidelines for teaching my subject area(s). (For example, school or DOE guidelines—Performance Standards, subject area frameworks)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #3a: Instruction & Curriculum (to #38 + #47)

27.	I effectively include students in the instructional planning process.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28.	I effectively use developmentally-appropriate instructional approaches. (For example, inquiry, student-selected topics/projects, and hands-on learning)	1	2	3	4	5	6
29.	I effectively provide opportunities for my students to move about and to engage curriculum in a physically active manner.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #3a: Instruction + Tech (#30 only)

30.	I effectively use electronic media for instruction (For example, computer software, the web, cd-roms, telecommunications media, and multimedia applications)	1	2	3	4	5	6
31.	I effectively use collaborative approaches to learning with early adolescents. (For example, cooperative learning, small groups, collaborative apprenticeship)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #3a: Instruction + Hetero Ability (#32–35)

32.	I effectively teach struggling learners.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33.	I effectively teach advanced learners.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34.	I effectively teach heterogeneous classes of students, including advanced, average and struggling learners.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35.	I effectively teach "special education students."	1	2	3	4	5	6
36.	I effectively teach interdisciplinary curriculum in collaboration with one or more colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #3a: Instruction + Literacy (#37–38)

37.	I effectively help early adolescents enjoy and improve their writing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38.	I effectively help early adolescents enjoy and improve their reading.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #3a: Assessment (to #46)

39.	I effectively assess student learning and development.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40.	I effectively conduct pre-assessment of student learning to determine what they know prior to a lesson or unit.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41.	I effectively conduct formative assessment of student learning to determine what they are learning during a lesson or unit.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42.	I effectively conduct summative assessment of student learning to determine what they have learned after a lesson or unit is over.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43.	I effectively assess learning to determine students' ability to *use* what is learned. (For example, through demonstrations, performances, solving real world problems)	1	2	3	4	5	6
44.	I effectively assess learning through portfolios (a student's collection of her/his work that shows self-reflection and progress over time).	1	2	3	4	5	6

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45. I effectively include students in the assessment of their learning. (For example, by having them reflect on their progress or rate themselves) 1 2 3 4 5 6

46. I effectively utilize peer assessment, where students rate each other's learning or performance. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Std #3a: Instruction & Curriculum + Exploration (#47 only)

47. I effectively provide students with opportunities to explore their individual interests in my curriculum. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Std #3b: Inclusion (#48–49; Could add in #32–35 for broad inclusion: ability, race, gender)

48. I effectively ensure that all students are included equally in the social and academic activities in my class, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, or language background. 1 2 3 4 5 6

49. I effectively ensure that girls and boys are included equally in the social and academic activities in my class. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Std #4a: General Communication, Management (#50–57)

50. I effectively utilize verbal communication so that early adolescents hear and understand what I am saying. 1 2 3 4 5 6

51. I effectively express my concerns and feelings with early adolescents (where appropriate). 1 2 3 4 5 6

52. I effectively help early adolescents explore their concerns and feelings. 1 2 3 4 5 6

53. I effectively help early adolescents to develop positive self concepts. 1 2 3 4 5 6

54. I effectively build community in my class so that all students feel safe and connected. 1 2 3 4 5 6

55. I effectively utilize "win–win" conflict resolution strategies with students, colleagues and parents. 1 2 3 4 5 6

56. I effectively monitor the emotional climate in my class and implement "morale boosters" as needed. 1 2 3 4 5 6

57. I effectively help students learn and apply conflict resolution strategies. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Std #4b: Classroom Management (#58–59)

58. I maintain an effective learning environment with early adolescents. 1 2 3 4 5 6

59. I effectively intervene when early adolescents engage in inappropriate classroom behavior. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Std #4c: Counseling/Advisory (#60–63)

60.	I effectively intervene when early adolescents are upset and/or agitated.	1	2	3	4	5	6
61.	I effectively help early adolescents identify and solve their own problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
62.	I effectively lead advisory groups where early adolescents explore issues such as relationships, peer pressure, conflict, and personal decision making.	1	2	3	4	5	6
63.	I effectively communicate one-on-one with early adolescents about sensitive topics. (For example, health, sexuality; problems at home, with peers or with other teachers)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #4a–d:Communication + Collaboration (#64–71)

64.	I effectively collaborate with colleagues so that we get things done and everyone does their fair share.	1	2	3	4	5	6
65.	I effectively express my concerns and feelings with colleagues (where appropriate).	1	2	3	4	5	6
66.	I communicate regularly with parents, family members and guardians of my students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
67.	I effectively listen to students' parents, family members and guardians, even when they are concerned or upset.	1	2	3	4	5	6
68.	I communicate regularly with my school's community members and youth agencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6
69.	I am a valued member of teams and committees that I serve on with colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
70.	I am effective at helping groups/teams of colleagues identify and solve professional problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
71.	I have colleagues who serve as a professional support group for me. (For example, by providing emotional, material and informational support)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #5a: Leadership (#72–75; #81–86)

72.	I see myself as an educational leader.	1	2	3	4	5	6
73.	I exercise leadership within my department and/or team.	1	2	3	4	5	6
74.	I exercise leadership at the whole-school level.	1	2	3	4	5	6
75.	I exercise educational leadership beyond my school.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #5c: Research & Writing (#76; 78–80; 87)

76.	I am effective at using professional writing to influence policy, funding and/or the thinking of other educational stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #5b: Reflection (#77)

77.	I critique my own professional work in a systematic, organized manner.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #5c: Research & Writing (#76; 78–80; 87)

78.	I am effective at reading research reports and assessing their validity and applicability to my professional context.	1	2	3	4	5	6
79.	I am effective at utilizing at least one research methodology, such as surveys, ethnography, statistical analysis, focus groups, video analysis.	1	2	3	4	5	6
80.	I can advance well-reasoned arguments regarding the uses and misuses of standardized testing in education.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #5a: Leadership (#81–86; #72–75)

81.	I am a member of a professional organization (other than mandatory membership in a labor organization).	1	2	3	4	5	6
82.	I have access to a wide array of human resources for professional consultation and assistance. (For example, local and national experts, well-informed colleagues, supervisors)	1	2	3	4	5	6
83.	I access a wide array of non-human resources for professional consultation and assistance. (For example, journals, curriculum guides, professional organizations, collections of educational materials)	1	2	3	4	5	6
84.	I hold positions of responsibility (elected, appointed, volunteer) in professional educational/youth leadership organizations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
85.	I testify/give input at policy meetings regarding early adolescent development and education.	1	2	3	4	5	6
86.	I teach, or conduct demonstrations or presentations for, other professional educators.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Std #5c: Research & Writing (#76; 78–80; 87)

87.	I publish professional writing (that is, share it beyond my school).	1	2	3	4	5	6

PART THREE
Open-Ended Responses

Directions: Please write brief responses to the following two questions. You may use the back of the page if necessary.

1. My greatest strengths as a middle level educator are:

2. My greatest needs for improvement, knowledge, or further development as a middle level educator are:

CHAPTER 27

KIMO'S NOT-SO-EXCELLENT DAY IN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

A Parable about Life in Traditional Middle Level Schools

Paul D. Deering
University of Hawai'i—Manoa

The following story is not "true" in the literal sense. It is not about a specific student, "Kimo," at a specific time, in a specific place. It is a parable based on many students with whom I have worked as a teacher and researcher in Ohio, Colorado and Hawai'i. It is not highly location-specific, culture-bound, nor gender-specific. Thus, by changing some details, this story could be about "Dave" or "Claudette" in Cleveland, "Ramón" or "Tina" in Denver, or "Jennifer" or "Fuji" in Honolulu.

Nevertheless, as with any parable, many truths are presented—truths are about the lives of early adolescents in highly traditional schools. *Kimo's Day* brings together a great number of unfortunate events to make its points, yet it is probably not too far exaggerated from many early adolescents' daily school experiences. By implication, of course, this parable also sheds light on the struggles of many middle level teachers.

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Hawai'i's "intermediate schools" have seventh and eighth grades, and are staffed with teachers holding secondary level certifications by content area. These schools have long operated on a traditional junior high school model. They are currently working on adopting developmentally responsive middle level approaches, as per recommendations of the National Middle School Association (1982, 1995) and the Carnegie Council on Adolescence (1989, 1995). A new Hawai'i Department of Education (2001) Middle Level Education Policy should help to speed up the process.

As you read this tale, consider how things could be different for Kimo and his teachers. What if the school were operating more like a middle school, and less like a junior "high school"? There are questions at the end of the story to guide your analysis. Hopefully, reading about Kimo's misadventures will help teachers and students to prevent such *not-so-excellent days* in middle level schools all over the country.

Kimo's Not-So-Excellent Day in Intermediate School

Kimo is a shy, handsome twelve year old. He's big for his age. He's also nervous about school and has a quick temper. Kimo got in lots of trouble with his sixth grade teacher, but he promised his mother that he'd really try to be good in intermediate school. A couple of weeks of school have passed and Kimo's managed to keep out of trouble. Maybe this isn't so bad.

First Period—Math

Kimo goes to his first period class. He walks into the room and sees thirty kids he doesn't know, and a teacher. No one seems to notice his cool new Hawaiian Power T-shirt. All the desks are in rows, with little tape marks on the floor to show just where they should be. The teacher calls Kimo "Young Man" when he catches him chewing gum. The teacher takes it away and tells Kimo to write "I must not chew gum" 100 times. The class is studying decimals, percents and graphing. The teacher assigns fifty problems for homework but says there won't be any homework tomorrow so they can study for their weekly test on Friday. This teacher wants students to put their names in the upper-right corner of their papers, and to do all work in pencil. The bell rings just as Kimo is getting an idea on how to solve a word problem.

As he makes his way to the other side of the campus, he's pushed and jostled by huge eighth graders.

Second Period—Social Studies

Kimo enters the room and recognizes a couple kids from his first period class, but he doesn't know their names. The teacher tells the class to take out some paper and put their names on it. She wants names in the upper left corner of the paper—or is it the bottom left? Kimo panics when he realizes that this teacher wants all work in ink, and he already lost all twenty pens that his mother bought at Costco!

The class is studying political elections, specifically, the role of the media and opinion polls. The teacher tells the class to read the next chapter in the textbook and answer the review questions at the end. She says they won't have any homework tomorrow since they have so much today. When the teacher sees Kimo writing in pencil she says, "Son, where is your pen?!" She tells him to come after school for detention. Kimo gets back to work, gritting his teeth.

The bell rings just as Kimo's eyes are starting to glaze over while staring at "media bias" in the text. The teacher reminds the class about the test on Friday.

As Kimo makes his way back across campus, some kids bump him and knock his books out of his hands. Dozens of kids pass by, but no one knows Kimo so nobody stops to help him.

Third Period—Art

Kimo gets to art class a little late, but that's OK. This teacher is pretty cool. He even lets you chew gum. But Kimo can't chew any 'cause his was taken away earlier. He recognizes a couple of kids from his other classes, but he doesn't know their names. The one guy he does know has been giving him stink-eye. Kimo wonders if he'll have to fight him.

Kimo sits by himself. They're going to be painting today—images from TV ads they've been studying. Kimo loves to paint, but he forgot to bring a big shirt for a smock. He'll just have to be careful. Time flies by as Kimo loses himself in the colors, shapes and textures of his painting. When the bell rings he can't believe that class is already over. The teacher reminds them about the big media projects due Friday. Kimo races to put down a few more brush strokes but knocks over his paint—all over his cool, new Hawaiian Power shirt! The teacher says, "Don't worry, Moki" and helps him clean up.

Kimo races out the door, turns the corner, and crashes into the school principal! Mr. Stone asks Kimo his name and says that he has a detention after school.

Fourth Period—Language Arts

Kimo barrels into L.A. class about thirty seconds after the bell has stopped ringing in his ears. Thirty students turn and stare at him like vultures waiting for the inevitable. The teacher asks his name, and tells Kimo to come in for a detention. Fighting back tears, Kimo heads for his seat. No way will he cry, especially not with that cute girl Keri in this class.

The teacher has the students take turns reading aloud about fact and opinion from their text books. Just as Kimo is starting to calm down and slide into a nice daydream about Keri, the teacher calls on him to read. He has no idea where they are, and he's extremely embarrassed at how slowly he reads. Kimo refuses. The teacher insists and he still refuses. Finally she tells him to go to the office. Kimo, with tears in his eyes, throws his book at the teacher, barely missing her. He storms out.

The security guard finds Kimo and takes him to the office. The principal recognizes Kimo as "the boy who got into trouble earlier today," and proceeds to call home. The last time the school called home, Kimo's father gave him a black eye. He wonders what will happen this time. What Kimo does know is that he won't be going to his favorite class—computers, or talking to Keri after fourth period, or having pizza for lunch.

Questions to Consider

What went wrong?
More importantly, how can it be "fixed?"
What are problems and solutions regarding:

Physical Facilities: Where are things and people located? Where are they in relation to each other? How can this be more efficient and supportive?

Time/Schedule: How much time is there for different activities and subjects? When and how do things begin and end? How can the use of time optimize learning?

Organization/Management: What kinds of operating procedures are there? How do they facilitate or undermine student and teacher success? What supports are in place to help early adolescents learn responsibility and organization?

Social/Affective Development: How are students' social and emotional needs taken care of (safety, belonging, love, power, freedom, fun, interaction with others)? Who *knows* the students? Whom do they know?

Technology: Where is it? How can it become a part of participants' lives, not just an afterthought?

Academic Curriculum: What are kids learning? How are subjects taught? How are they related to one another? What would *interest* early adolescents?

Consider, if you haven't already, the following middle level educational structures and approaches:

- Interdisciplinary Teaming—coordinated schedules/procedures; integrated curriculum

- Advisory Program—advisory groups; assigned advisor
- Exploratory Program
- Cooperative Learning
- Flexible/Block Scheduling

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

P. Gayle Andrews is Assistant Professor at The University of Georgia. A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, she served as national director of Carnegie Corporation's Middle Grade School State Policy Initiative. She is co-author (under the name "Davis"), with Anthony Jackson, of *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century.* She also serves on the National Middle School Association's Research Committee, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, and as a Council member for AERA's Middle Level Education Research SIG.

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr. is Associate Professor of Educational Administration and Policy Studies at The University of Tennessee. He is the series editor of *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education,* President of the American Educational Research Association's Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group, and a member of the National Middle School Association's Research Committee. He is the author of numerous journal articles focusing on middle school reform and issues related to middle level principals, and is the co-author of *From the Desk of the Middle School Principal: Leadership Responsive to the Needs of Young Adolescents* (2002, with Kathleen M. Brown).

Kathleen M. Brown is Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She received her Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Policy Studies from Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. Her research interests include reform in middle level education; effective instructional leadership that marries theory, practice, and issues of social justice; establishing an ethic of care and community in

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schools; and qualitative research. She brings to the university 15 years of experience as a middle school teacher and principal.

Deborah A. Butler is Professor and Director of Teacher Education at Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana. She received her graduate degrees from the University of Virginia and has taught in Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Indiana. With a background in English education, middle grades, and literacy at the middle level, she has authored a number of books, chapters, and articles, including *Unheard Voices: American Women Writing on the Vietnam Conflict, Rooms to Grow: Natural Language Arts in the Middle Grades* (with Tom Liner), and *Addressing Gender Differences in Young Adolescents* (with Lee Manning).

Loyce Caruthers is Assistant Professor in the Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education Division at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. She holds a doctorate in Education Administration from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and is involved in a study of a multi-year urban reform initiative. She has authored numerous programmatic, technical, and professional publications. She has over 25 years experience in urban education, serving as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Director of the McRel Educational Equity Center, Staff Developer, Coordinator of Effective Schools, Gender Equity Coordinator, and Middle School and Title I Educator.

Micki M. Caskey is Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction of the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University. She specializes in middle level education, which builds upon her school teaching career. Micki's interests include authentic curriculum, technology integration, instructional strategies, and content enhancements.

Donna M. Davis is Assistant Professor in the Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education Division at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. She holds a doctorate in Education Foundations from the University of Kansas and currently teaches philosophical and sociological foundations of education. Her research is in the area of multiculturalism, desegregation, and urban education.

Thomas S. Dickinson is Professor of Education at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. He is on a two-year leave of absence from his tenured position at Indiana State University where he will resume his duties as Professor of Education in the fall of 2004. A graduate of Wake Forest University (B.A.) and the University of Virginia (M.S. and Ed. D.), he has taught middle and high school in Virginia and taught at the college and university level in North Carolina, Illinois, Georgia, and Indiana. A former editor of

Middle School Journal for National Middle School Association, he is the author of numerous books, chapters, and articles on middle school education. He maintains a strong interest and focus on middle school teacher education, middle school national standards, and the historical development of the middle school movement.

Nancy Flowers is Coordinator of Research Programs at the Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Nancy has been with CPRD since 1992, and serves as a co-principal investigator for several projects in CPRD's programmatic area of school reform and innovation. The focus of her work is the dissemination of research findings and data to support data-based decision making at the individual school level, the project level, and to inform policy, as well as the continued refinement and coordination of large-scale quantitative data collection with middle schools throughout the country.

Susan Galletti is Vice President for School Services and Middle Grades Research at the Galef Institute, a comprehensive school reform model provider. She served as Associate Executive Director at the National Association of Secondary School Principals and worked as a teacher and principal in Washington. Susan is a member of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform and the author of several publications on middle grades school reform.

Pritha Gopalan is a program officer at the Center for School and Community Services at the Academy for Educational Development. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania. She serves as the principal qualitative researcher on two middle-level educational projects: Middle Start, a comprehensive school reform design, and School Self-Assessment, an approach to inquiry-based school improvement. Her interests include stakeholders' (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, and students) perspectives on middle-grades school improvement.

Larry Gregg is Assistant Professor in the Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education Division at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. He has served as Director of Elementary Education and Director of Professional Development. He also worked as an elementary school principal for 15 years and has taught numerous grades from K-9.

Steven Jay Gross is Associate Professor of Educational Administration at Temple University, where his research interests focus on initiating and sustaining curriculum, instruction, and assessment leadership in K-16 settings. He is the author of the book, *Staying Centered: Curriculum Leadership in a*

Turbulent Era (1998), and has led local, state, and national curriculum reform efforts.

Ruth G. Kane is Professor of Secondary Education at Massey University in New Zealand. Originally trained as a secondary teacher, Ruth has worked in pre-service secondary teacher education in Australia and New Zealand. Her current research interests include self study of teacher education practice, teacher beliefs, narratives of beginning teachers, and critical examination of the place of social justice in pre-service teacher education.

Angela J. Lexmond recently completed the doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at Indiana University. In 2000, she was honored with the Outstanding Associate Instructor Award for her work in multicultural education and teaching methods courses. She has taught high school and middle school English, speech, and drama in Indiana, Upper Michigan, and Mexico. Her research interests include middle level teacher preparation, media literacy, and sexual minority youth.

Peter Lind has researched and taught in the field of teacher education since 1984. As Director of Teacher Education in one of the largest teacher education programs in Aotearoa New Zealand, he has been responsible for the pre-service teacher preparation programs. He has worked closely with practitioners and his current role demands close liaison with schools and early childhood centers.

Stephen Earl Lucas is Assistant Professor of Educational Administration in the Department of Educational Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A former middle level teacher and administrator, his research focuses on middle level principal and teacher leadership, transformational leadership theory, and collaborative school leadership.

C. Kenneth McEwin is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina. He is a former sixth grade teacher and principal, and has extensive experience as a consultant to schools, school districts, state departments of education, higher education institutions, and policy-making bodies. Dr. McEwin is author of numerous professional publications focusing on middle school education and recipient of the National Middle School Association's John H. Lounsbury Distinguished Service Award.

Steven B. Mertens is Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois, where he has been involved with the research and evaluation of several large-scale middle grades reform projects. Together with his colleagues at CPRD, he has published numerous articles and reports addressing various areas of school reform and improvement. He currently serves as a member of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, the National Middle School Association's Research Committee, and as a Council Member for AERA's Middle Level Education Research SIG.

Mark T. Miles is the principal of Plaza Middle School in the Park Hill School District in Kansas City, Missouri. Before joining the Park Hill School District, he was a teacher and administrator in the Columbia (MO) Public School District. He received his B.S. degree (1993) in Secondary Social Studies Education, his M.A. degree (1994) in Political Science, his Ed.S. (2001) in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, and his Ph.D. degree (2002) in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri, Columbia. While completing his Ph.D. degree, he worked as a Graduate Research Assistant in the Middle Level Leadership Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia from 2000–2002.

Timothy M. Mullen is a National Board Certified Teacher in Early Adolescent (ages 11 -15) Science. He earned his B. S. degree in Environmental Resources Management from Pennsylvania State University, M. S. in Public Administration from Columbus College and State University, and is currently a doctoral candidate in Middle Grades Education at The University of Georgia. After working in the governmental and corporate sector for fourteen years, he is now a middle grades teacher. He is the 2002 Teacher of the Year for his school and is a member of the 2003 Georgia Middle School Team of the Year. He assists and facilitates teachers considering the National Board certification.

C. J. Patrick Nolan is Director of the Massey University Graduate School of Education. His professional and research interests include curriculum development and design, experiential learning, educational management and administration with computers, and school development. He has worked on substantial research and development projects regarding developing middle schools for New Zealand, cross-curricula road safety education programs, computer augmented learning and integrative curricula for the middle level, and computerized school information systems for New Zealand.

P. Elizabeth Pate is Associate Professor in the Department of Elementary Education, Middle School Program (College of Education) and an Adjunct Professor in the Institute of Ecology (College of Environment and Design) at The University of Georgia. Her research interests include service learning, curriculum integration, and democratic education. She frequently collaborates with middle school teachers and students on teaching projects and research activities.

Vicki Nord Petzko is Associate Professor of School Leadership at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Policy Studies from the University of Minnesota in 1990. Before entering the professorate she spent 24 years as a middle school teacher, high school associate principal, and middle level principal. Her middle level school earned a "Blue Ribbon National School of Excellence" Award in 1997. She co-authored the *National Study of Leadership in Middle Level Schools, Volume 1* (2002, with Valentine, Clark, and Hackmann), and is currently working on *Volume 2* (2003, with Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, & Lucas). She has also published on legal issues in education and the identification and recruitment of aspiring principals.

M. Michele Pittard is Assistant Professor in Teacher Education and Fellow at the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. She completed her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Purdue University. Her research interests include narrative inquiry, teacher knowledge, and identity development. At Wabash College, Michele teaches methods courses, introduction to education, and content area literacy. She enjoys teaching and mentoring preservice teacher candidates and working with inservice teachers as they pursue professional development through collaborative inquiry groups. Most recently, Michele published an annotated bibliography for a special middle school themed edition of *English Education*.

Tracy W. Smith is Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. She teaches and advises in the undergraduate and graduate middle level teacher preparation programs at Appalachian State University. She is a former middle school language arts and social studies teacher. Her publications and research focus on middle level teacher preparation, teacher expertise, depth of student learning, and writing instruction.

Katherine F. Thompson co-directs The League of Professional Schools in the College of Education at The University of Georgia. Katherine is also an instructor in the Department of Elementary Education at UGA. She was a middle school teacher for fourteen years and has a Ph.D. in middle grades education. Her work in public schools and research interests focus on empowering students and teachers through democratic learning.

Sue Carol Thompson is Assistant Professor in the Urban Leadership and Policy Studies in Education Division at the University of Missouri, Kansas

City. She has been a middle school teacher, principal, and director of middle level education. She serves on the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform and is Chair of the National Middle School Association's Urban Issues Task Force. Her research interests include middle school reculturing, leadership, and issues of race/ethnicity, class, and gender as they relate to social equity and democratic schools.

Alexandra T. Weinbaum is vice president and director of the Center for School and Community Services at the Academy for Educational Development. She received her Ph.D in history from Columbia University. She oversees several research, evaluation, and technical assistance projects in middle-level education, inquiry-based school improvement, and school-community partnerships. Publications include: "Seeding Inquiry at Maxson Middle School: Challenges and Opportunities" in the co-authored volume *Inquiry into Teacher and Student Work* (Teachers College Press, 2004).

Ronald Williamson is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Eastern Michigan University. He was formerly Executive Director of the National Middle School Association and worked as a middle school teacher, team leader, assistant principal, principal, and Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction in the Ann Arbor (MI) Public Schools. He is the author of numerous books and articles on leadership and middle level schools, and is a member of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform.

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